

No. 567

AUGUST 11, 1916

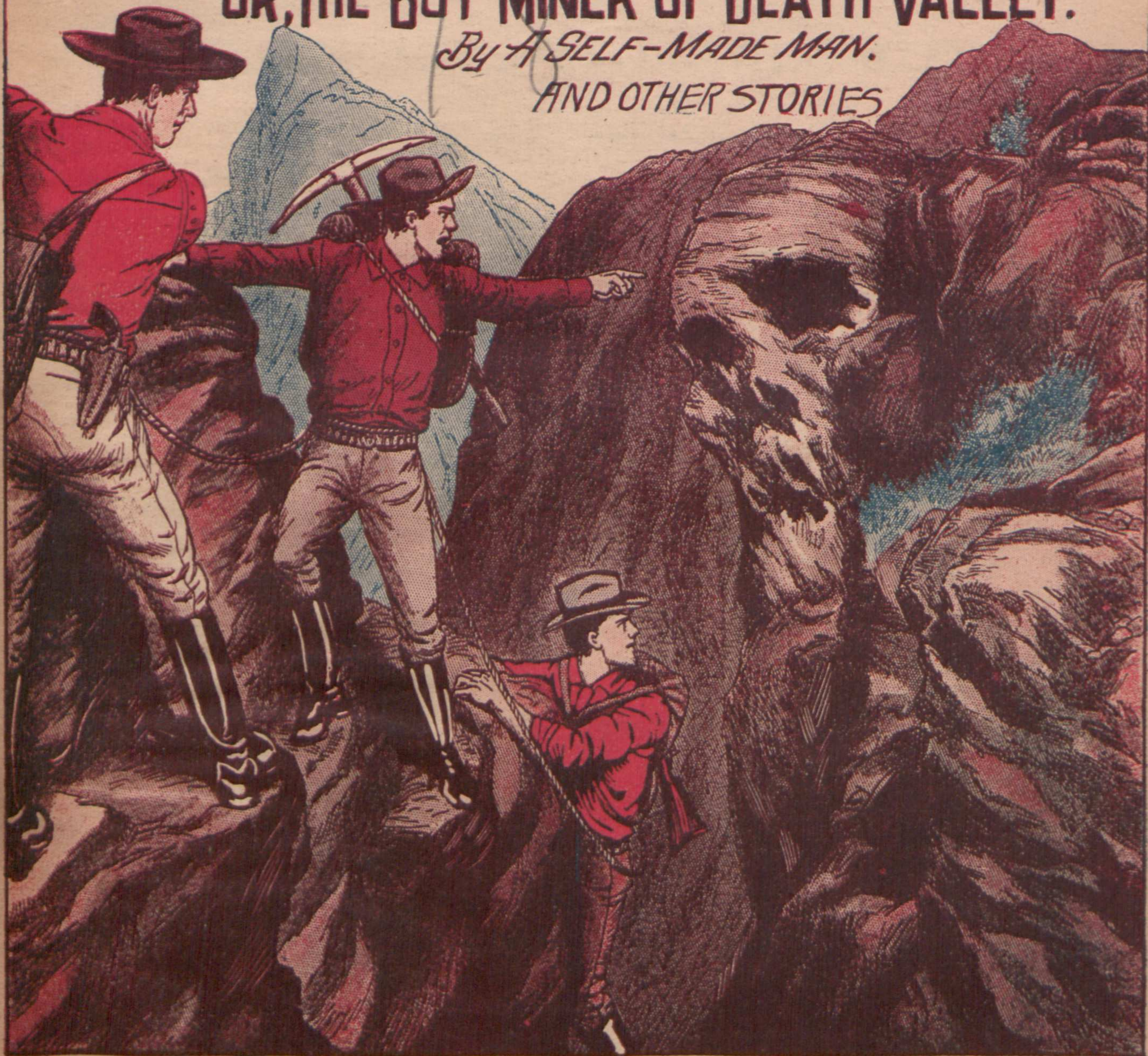
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FAME ^{AND} FORTUNE WEEKLY.

STORIES OF
BOYS THAT MAKE MONEY.

THE PATH TO GOOD LUCK;
OR, THE BOY MINER OF DEATH VALLEY.

*By A SELF-MADE MAN.
AND OTHER STORIES*



"See!" cried Tom Collingwood, pointing across the fissure. "The Giant's Skull!" "My gracious!" exclaimed Bob. "So it is." Sam, lower down, gave a startled gasp. The three boys gazed awesomely at the curious rocky formation staring them in the face.

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FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY

Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered at the New York, N. Y., Post Office as Second-Class Matter by Frank Tousey, Publisher, 168 West 23d Street, New York.

No. 567.

NEW YORK, AUGUST 11, 1916.

Price 5 Cents.

THE PATH TO GOOD LUCK

—OR—

THE BOY MINER OF DEATH VALLEY

By A SELF-MADE MAN.

CHAPTER I.

IN THE GRASP OF THE STORM.

"This is simply fierce, Tom," said Bob Preston, in a tone of disgust, looking out into the night through the partially open door of a small tool-house close to the tracks of the Midland Central Railroad where he and Tom Collingwood had taken refuge from the storm three hours since and had been waiting in vain for a chance to resume their way back to Forksville, five miles distant, where they lived.

"Bet your life it is," replied his companion, with a sagacious nod.

"It's still raining like cats and dogs."

"That's what it is."

"And blowing to beat the band."

"I should say so."

"I am hungry enough to chew a pound of nails."

"Same here."

"How are we going to reach town?"

"Hoof it to the trolley when the storm lets up."

"When it does. That won't be before morning from the present outlook."

"Oh, not so long as that," replied Tom, encouragingly.

"The trolley is two miles away."

"I guess it's all of that."

"And the road must be ankle deep with mud by this time, without mentioning the puddles we're liable to flounder into in the dark," growled Bob.

Tom made no reply.

The prospect before them of walking to the trolley line was not a particularly cheerful one.

Anyway it was not to be thought of at that moment with the sixty-mile gale blowing sheets of water against the wall of the tool-house.

Tom Collingwood and Bob Preston were both orphans who boarded in the same house in Forksville, and worked side by side at the same bench in the Forksville Cutlery Works.

They were also sworn friends and companions.

The special branch of the cutlery business they had learned was the manufacture of penknives, and after an experience of about four years at the trade they had become quite expert workers.

Their job was rather an independent one as it was paid for by the piece.

They were not compelled to work any stated number of hours a day.

After reporting in the morning they could quit when it pleased them, provided that they turned a certain amount of properly executed work out on the average.

Of course the more hours they put in and the faster they worked the more money they received at the end of the week.

Until lately it had been their ambition to make all they could, and each had accumulated a nice little sum at the savings bank.

But a change had come over them within the last month. This was especially the case with respect to Tom.

He had got hold of a quantity of mining literature, had read every word of it with deep interest, and from that moment the cutlery business ceased to interest him.

His ambition turned to fresh fields and pastures new.

In other words, he longed to go out West and embark in the mining business.

The fifteen odd dollars a week he was making in the factory looked insignificant when compared with the fortunes that other people seemed to be picking up in the mines of Nevada and other places where the gold quartz was to be had.

Boy like, he had only a very indefinite idea of how the gold was got at.

He had lately read several stories about placer mining in the earlier days of the discovery of gold in California, Cripple Creek, and such places. When the first rush of prospectors and miners had confined themselves to the surface diggings, and he imagined that it was only necessary to secure a claim in some mining district where there was a stream of water within easy reach, dig up the pay dirt, wash out the gold dust and nuggets, and thus become rich in no time at all.

He talked the matter over eagerly with Bob, and as his friend knew no more about the subject than himself, they both were of one mind—that digging for gold was an easy road to fortune.

The question that was now agitating both lads was whether they should throw up their jobs at Forksville, which was known as the Sheffield of America, and start out West to become miners.

On the day our story opens they had taken the afternoon off to go fishing in a branch of the Snake River, their favorite recreation, and to talk the matter over with the object of reaching a conclusion.

The fishing ground was about six miles from Forksville, near the line of the Midland Central Railroad, and the trolley car took them within two miles of the spot.

After leaving the trolley line they footed it along a country crossroad.

While it was a dull-looking afternoon they had not expected it to storm.

That was where their calculations failed them, for after they had been fishing an hour or so, rain began to fall so briskly that they had to take refuge in an old hut near the bank of the river.

With the rain came a gradually increasing wind, and the weather soon became so inclement that the prospect of their

getting back to Forksville before dark, or even soon after, in anything like a presentable condition, looked exceedingly small.

Dusk came on about half-past five, and then the weather showed some signs of clearing.

They took advantage of the fact to start down the railroad toward the road leading to the trolley.

As they passed a small toolshed used by the section men the storm burst over the landscape afresh, and with greater fury than ever.

The wind almost swept them off their feet, and in a few minutes they would have been drenched to the skin but that Tom's sharp eyes noticed that through some oversight the tool shed had not been locked.

Calling his companion's attention to the fact, the boys made a dash for the shed and were soon under cover.

Here they waited hour after hour for the storm to pass away, but it kept on as bad as ever.

It began to look as if they'd have to stay in the shed all night, which wasn't a pleasant reflection, as they were by this time as hungry as a pair of hunters.

After the conversation with which this chapter opens had come to an abrupt halt, silence reigned in the tool-shed for a few minutes.

Then Tom took his jack-knife out of his pocket and began to tap off a succession of sounds on the wheel of the hand-car on which the boys were seated.

Bob suddenly pricked up his ears, took out his jack-knife, and when Tom stopped he began to tick off similar sounds on the wheel nearest to him.

What were they doing?

Simply this—Tom had resumed the conversation through the agency of the Morse telegraphic alphabet, and Bob was answering him.

In explanation of this curious turn of affairs we need only say that six months since Tom had got the idea into his head that he would like to be a telegraph operator.

He had got acquainted with the night operator in the Midland Central train despatcher's office at Forksville, and after several visits to the office he became infatuated with the sound of the telegraph instrument.

He prevailed upon his friend, the operator, to instruct him in the art of transmitting words by sound.

He was an apt and enthusiastic learner and soon had the rudiments down fine.

After a while it became tiresome to practice by himself, so he interested Bob in the matter, taught him all he knew, and for some time thereafter the boys would do a large part of their talking by the Morse alphabet.

It especially amused them to talk across the table at their boarding-house by using a fork and a plate or saucer.

Then they would sometimes make fun of the other boarders just to amuse themselves.

One evening, however, this entertainment received a rude shock.

A vinegary-looking young lady came to board at the house, and the first night she appeared at the table, Bob piped her off in no very complimentary terms.

The new boarder, unfortunately for the boys, happened to be a telegraph operator.

She instantly understood what Bob was saying about her.

The moment he stopped to receive Tom's reply she chipped in with her own fork on her plate in rather loud and forceful accents, and the few words she said in the Morse alphabet put a stop to any more amusement on the boys' part on that occasion.

To resume the thread of our story, this is what Tom ticked off to Bob:

"Say, Bob, what's the matter with our counting the ties to town instead of wading through the mud two miles to the trolley? It's only three miles further, and the roadbed is good and solid."

"Suits me when the weather clears," Bob ticked back in the darkness.

"It isn't raining near as hard as it was five minutes ago."

"That's right, but it may come on again any moment."

"We'll wait and see."

There was a pause in the sounds and then Bob began to click off something about their mining project, and Tom answered him.

Thus fifteen minutes passed, during which the rain ceased altogether and the wind decreased a good bit.

Finally Tom jumped off the hand-car and looked out at the night.

The storm seemed to be over, though the sky was still overcast.

"It's clearing up," he said. "Let's start off."

"Hold on," said Bob; "what time is it?"

Tom struck a match and consulted his silver watch.

"Five minutes of ten."

"Then we can't go yet a while," returned Bob.

"Why not?"

"We might get run down by the night express."

"Not if we keep our eyes open."

"Suppose it overtook us in the middle of the bridge?"

"We can stick to the up track, can't we, and let it go by?"

"But there's a local comes along that track about the same time."

"If the local comes along first we can step across to the other track until it passes."

"They might both show up at the same time."

"Not likely."

"Suppose we miss our footing crossing the girders in the darkness? It's a drop of thirty feet to the street below, and that's full of rocks."

"Any more objections to the railroad?" laughed Tom Collingwood, reseating himself on the hand-car.

"I could mention several more. We might find a wash-out, or the bridge down, or—"

"The track under water."

"No; not much danger of that."

"Why not, where it skirts the marsh beyond the cutting?"

"That's so. I didn't think of that."

"Well, I could sweep away some of your objections if you're game to take a chance."

"What kind of a chance?"

"Beating the express to the cut. We've plenty of time to do it."

"I don't understand what you mean."

"What are we sitting on?"

"A hand-car."

"Exactly. Suppose we run her out on the track and work her down as far as the cut, life her off on to the quarry branch until after the express passes, put her back on the line and continue on to the yards at Forksville? That will warm us up, save shoe leather, and we'll avoid counting the bridge girders."

"Your idea isn't half bad," admitted Bob.

"I should say not."

"But there's one objection."

"What's that?"

"We are likely to meet the track walker who goes over this section of the line before the express is due to see that the track is clear."

"Suppose we do?"

"He'll hold us up and give us Hail Columbia."

"We won't give him a chance to head us off. He won't see us in such a night as this until we're right upon him. Then he'll take us for section hands on special service."

"Well, I'm game to make the run if you are."

"That's the way to talk, Bob. Kick the door open and we'll run the car out."

"Why not wait until the express has gone by, then we needn't derail at the cut?"

"I don't feel like waiting twenty minutes or half an hour more. I want to get alongside a good square meal just as soon as I can."

"All right," said Bob. "I'm with you."

The two boys ran the hand-car out of the small shed not far from the main track where they had taken refuge from the storm, pushed it along the curving rail till they reached the roadbed, and then shifted it on to the down track.

"Get up and I'll give her a start," said Tom to his companion.

Bob Preston mounted the car and seized the forward handle which he began to work up and down slowly as Tom pushed from behind.

As soon as sufficient momentum had been applied to the car, Tom sprang on to the platform and caught hold of the other handle.

"Now, then, let her go, Bob. Work lively. We ought to reach the cut in ten or twelve minutes."

CHAPTER II.

TELEGRAPHING WITHOUT INSTRUMENTS.

The boys got down to work, for they had quite a distance to go to reach the steel girder bridge and the cut beyond. They had maybe half an hour leeway of the night express, and they expected to let it pass them at the cut.

The Snake River ran whirling and boiling under the bridge, and a hundred yards further on was a big stone culvert built to accommodate a narrow but swift branch of the same river.

The boys knew the road very well, for they had been over it several times on a hand-car with the section men of that neighborhood.

The foreman of the gang was a particular friend of Bob's, and the boys sometimes went to the different places where the men were employed to level up the tracks and attend to the roadbed.

This was a constant and very important duty performed on every mile of the division, just as it is done on every railroad in the country, for the ponderous locomotives now in use, as well as the heavy sleepers and big freight cars, bear hard upon the roadbed these days, and to prevent accidents the line has got to be gone over, yard by yard, perpetually in order to keep the track straight.

Bolts and fish-plates are continually becoming loose and must be attended to, and the job of looking after such things is up to the section foreman.

The hedges and fields flashed by in the darkness as Tom and Bob applied their muscular strength to the handles of the hand-car.

Clickety clack! Clickety clack!

That was the kind of music the wheels made every time they hit the dividing line between the rails.

The way was dark, lonesome and silent, for the storm had hushed the insect voices of the night.

At length they heard the dull, rushing sound of the Snake River as it dashed along under the steel girder bridge.

The ponderous arms of the bridge presently rose out of the gloom ahead, and in a few minutes they were humming across the steel span.

The culvert was right ahead, and a quarter of a mile beyond that lay the cut where they were to wait for the express to pass them.

Suddenly the moon sailed out for a moment between the scudding clouds and briefly illumined the track ahead.

It was a providential circumstance, and it was also fortunate that Tom's eyes were sharp and that they glanced down the line as he pulled up the handle of the hand-car.

What he saw only a few yards ahead sent his heart into his mouth and brought a warning cry to his lips.

Half of the culvert had disappeared and a yawning hole of many yards in width lay in their path.

The foundation of the part nearest the on-rushing hand-car had no doubt been weakened by the river, aided by the weight and jar of passing trains, and the swollen water caused by the late storm had completed its undoing.

At any rate it was now a wreck.

Tom saw the car could not be stopped in time to save it from going over into the chasm, so he yelled out to his companion:

"Jump, Bob! For heaven's sake, jump quick! The culvert is gone."

He relinquished his hold on the handle and sprang off into the space between the rails.

He went down on his hands and knees, but was soon on his feet.

Bob turned a startled glance behind him, saw his peril and jumped also.

He was not as fortunate as Tom, for he turned a complete somersault, and but for a network of telegraph wire that lay close to the edge of the break he might have slipped over into the river.

As the hand-car crashed down into the abyss, Tom rushed forward and seized Bob by the hand.

"Not hurt, old chap, are you?" he inquired anxiously.

Bob did not immediately reply.

The breath had been shaken out of his body and he was half stunned.

But he soon pulled himself together, much to Collingwood's relief.

"Gee whiz!" he palpitated, "I thought it was all over with me."

"Oh, you're worth a dozen dead boys yet," replied Tom, cheerfully.

Bob looked into the chasm.

"This is a bad break and no mistake," he said.

"Bad!" gasped Tom, who was alive to the exigency of the moment, "it means destruction to the express and the local, both due at this point in a very short time, unless the track-walker has been here, discovered the washout and notified the despatcher's office at Forksville to hold the local and to telegraph Block House 16 up the line to stop the express at that point."

"My gracious!" fluttered Preston. Then he added: "Suppose he hasn't got on to the trouble yet?"

"I don't like to suppose any such thing. It's his duty to go over the track in time to allow him ample leeway to return to his hut at the cutting and send in a telephone message."

"At any rate our further progress down the line is cut off," said Bob.

"No matter about us. I'm thinking about those trains. I'd like to be sure that the news is known at the despatcher's office."

"I don't see how you can find out," replied Bob.

Tom did not reply, but looked down at the tangle of wires lying near his feet.

The pole that had held the wires aloft at this end of the culvert had gone down in the wreck and the top end with the cross-piece had snapped off.

All the wires appeared to be intact except the top one, which Tom knew to be the railroad company's wire.

That was severed within a yard or so of the glass bulb around which it was insulated.

"What are you looking at?" asked Bob, curiously.

"The wires," replied Tom shortly.

"If we only had instruments you could send a message to the despatcher's office and let the night operator know about the accident to the culvert," said Bob.

"What's the use of talking?" replied Tom, brusquely. "We haven't got instruments."

"Even if we had we couldn't get the despatcher's office, for neither of us know the call."

"I do," answered Tom, sharply. "It's JP—11."

"Is it? Well, I'm thinking it won't do us any good."

"I've got an idea," went on Tom. "I don't know whether I could work it."

"What's your idea?"

"Harvard, the night operator at the despatcher's office, the chap who taught me how to telegraph, told me of a way by which a message could be sent without instruments, under certain conditions, in case of emergency."

"He did?" exclaimed Bob, eagerly. "How can it be done?"

"I have no time to explain, but I've a great mind to try the plan, and then you'll see how it's done. It may be only possible with an expert, in which case it will be a failure with me. The urgency of the case, I think, warrants a trial. Do you see the top wire? The broken one?"

"Sure," replied Bob.

"Unwind it from the glass holder and pull it in so as to get as much slack as possible. Do you understand?"

Bob understood and proceeded to obey directions.

While he was thus engaged Tom hunted for the other broken end and soon found it lying on the ground by itself.

Interrupted communication he knew had already told the operator that something was wrong somewhere up the line with the wire.

He had probably surmised that the storm had blown a pole down and broken the company's wire at any rate.

Tom hauled in on the wire and made as much slack as he could, and by that time Bob was ready with the other end in his hand.

Before making another move Tom went to the broken top of the pole where he had seen a strip of insulating material fluttering in the wind.

He tore it into two pieces, wrapped one piece around the part of the broken wire he held in his hand and the other about the wire Bob held.

Then he took the two ends in his hands, one end in each, and began to touch the points of the wire together and separate them, thus connecting and breaking the circuit.

Bob watched his movements with excited interest.

Over and over Tom repeated the call of the despatcher's office at Forksville, doing it as skillfully as possible under the circumstances.

When he had repeated it several times he thrust out his tongue, placing one end of the broken wire on one side of it and the other end on the other side.

For some moments the boy stood thus, his whole attention concentrated on his experiment.

There was no result, and a disappointed expression came over his features.

Taking the wires from his tongue Tom repeated the call over again.

Once more he applied the ends of the wire to his tongue. Suddenly he gave a start and a thrill passed through his body.

The night operator at the despatcher's office had recognized and was answering his call.

CHAPTER III.

SAVING THE EXPRESS.

Tom could feel the successive shocks pass through his tongue, which is an extremely sensitive part of the human body, as the night operator at the despatcher's office answered the call.

It was not easy for the boy to distinguish the dots from the dashes, but by centering his whole attention on it Tom was able to make out that his friend Harvard was asking who was calling.

Tom at once removed the wire from his mouth, and by touching the points together slowly spelled out the following words:

"Tom Collingwood. Am working without instruments, using the ends of the broken wire. Can you understand? Answer slowly."

Tom again applied the points of the wires to his tongue. The answer came back to him; Harvard, no doubt greatly astonished, having taken the tip to work slowly.

"I get you O. K. Where are you, Collingwood, and what does this mean?"

"At the southern end of the culvert, which has been washed away. All the wires are down. Hold the night local, for trains can't pass this point."

Bob in the meantime had been following his chum's movements with the most intense interest and expectation.

As soon as he heard Tom sending in words he knew that communication had been established with the train despatcher's office, and he uttered an exclamation of astonishment as well as satisfaction.

He had sense enough not to interrupt his friend while he was engaged in this important business.

"Do you mean to say the culvert is gone?" came back the words to Tom.

"Yes," answered the boy.

"Great Scott!" unconsciously telegraphed Harvard.

"Join the wire so I can call up Block House 16."

Tom knew that the operator intended to try and stop the express at that point and he quickly obeyed.

"I got Harvard all right, Bob," said Tom, his voice quivering with excitement.

"I saw you did," replied his chum. "What are you doing now?"

"I've connected the circuit so the operator can communicate with Block House 16 for the purpose of getting the express."

"Will he be in time?" asked Bob, feverishly.

"I can't tell."

"If the express has passed the block house can it be stopped?"

The faint distant scream of a locomotive whistle from up the line was at that moment borne to the ears of the two boys.

"Too late!" gasped Tom, almost dropping the wires. "There's the express now passing the siding near Prescott."

"What's to be done? It will be here in four minutes," palpitated Bob.

Tom gazed wildly around as though searching for some means to prevent the apparently inevitable disaster.

The night express had passed the block house and could not be stopped by telegraph.

In fact, it looked as though nothing short of a miracle could save the train.

At that moment Tom's eyes were attracted by a glimmer of light on the other side of the broken culvert.

He shaded his eyes and gazed eagerly through the darkness.

"I believe there's a lantern yonder," he said, in quivering tones.

"That won't do us any good if it is," said Bob. "It's across the chasm."

Tom made no reply, but rushing to the edge of the break, grasped the network of wires and swung one leg across them.

"What are you going to do?" asked the astonished Bob.

"Get that lantern if I can. The express must be signalled at all hazards, and the lantern is our only hope."

"You'll never get across and back in time," said Bob.

Tom made no answer, for he was already swinging over the rushing river, making his precarious journey as fast as he could.

The distance to be traversed was not far, but the wires swung and sagged under his weight, for they were not accustomed to be put to such a purpose.

Fortunately the broken top-piece of the lost pole was anchored to a small section of the culvert that still stood on that side of the stream, and by this means the wires were held fairly taut.

It took Tom just a minute to cross.

As the boy dashed forward and reached for the lantern which stood burning between the down rails, where it had no business to be, he almost stumbled over the figure of a man stretched motionless across the track.

Tom guessed at once that this must be the track walker, who had been stricken down, probably at the moment the culvert had given way.

The boy had no time to see whether he was dead or simply unconscious.

Grasping the lantern he rushed back to the edge of the broken masonry.

With the lantern swinging on his arm he pulled himself across the chasm with the same feverish eagerness and speed he had displayed in crossing from the other side.

As he reached the end of the break Bob bent down and assisted him up on to the firm ground.

Then Tom, without exchanging a word with his chum, dashed off in the direction of the steel girder bridge, 350 feet away.

His feet fairly flew over the ground for the precious moments left to signal the express were very few by this time.

In fact, Tom could hear the low vibrations of the rails as the ponderous train came dashing along at a speed of fifty miles an hour.

The engineer always slackened up a bit as soon as he came around the long curve and sighted the bridge, but even at that the momentum of the heavy train, unless checked at a sufficient distance to enable its velocity to be fully overcome by the air-brakes, was likely to carry it over the distance between the bridge and the culvert and into the river.

The fate of the train and all on board depended wholly on Tom, and the boy fully realized that fact.

At last he reached the edge of the masonry that carried the steel framework of the bridge.

The thunder of the approaching train was now in his ears.

How far it was away he could not judge, but he expected to see the glaring headlight swing around the curve a short distance ahead at any moment.

What was he to do?

The situation was terrible.

If he tried to cross the girders, which were wide apart and smothered by the darkness, he would probably meet the flying locomotive half way and he dashed to atoms.

If he stayed where he was and swung the lantern, the engineer would hardly be able to check his train in time to avoid disaster.

He had no time to consider the matter.

He must either push ahead at once or remain where he was.

He never knew afterward how he made up his mind to do what he did, but he had a dim recollection that the inspiration came as he hung back a second or two on the brink of that awful journey.

It occurred to him to jump from girder to girder as far as he could go towards the other side, and if the engine reached the bridge before he could get to the end of the span, to swing his lantern wildly and then drop between two of the cross-bars, taking every risk of catching one of the bars by his fingers to save him from going headlong into the river.

It was a heroic effort, in the face of almost certain death, to save the express.

Tom sprang forward, swinging his lantern so that he could distinguish the position of the next girder ahead and make the leap with sufficient accuracy.

The roar of the oncoming train seemed to shake the very earth.

The bridge trembled.

The boy felt the vibrations growing stronger every moment.

He was now half way across.

Would he have time to complete the distance?

A sudden glare shot up through the trees around the curve as the fireman of the locomotive opened the furnace door to throw in more coal.

As Tom alighted on the next girder the headlight of the engine shot into view.

He was caught near the centre of the bridge with but a few seconds in which to signal the engineer and make his leap for death or possible safety.

He lost no time in swinging the lantern in the way he had seen the yard men do when at night they had to stop an engine somewhere along the track.

Only his movements were more erratic and frantic.

The wide-awake engineer, however, saw the flashing of the red light in an instant, and recognizing the signal which portended trouble ahead, he reversed the drivers and whistled "down brakes," at the same time setting the air-brakes hard and fast.

The cars jarred so heavily and suddenly one upon the other that passengers in the ordinary coaches were thrown about in heaps, while those who occupied the sleepers, and were either in their bunks or preparing to get into them, were almost as roughly handled.

The utmost consternation was aroused throughout the train, and the first impression that prevailed was that they had run into a train ahead.

Forgetful of his danger, of the possibility of his losing his balance on the narrow cross-bar which supported him, Tom continued to swing his lantern with the red side toward the train, and to shout from sheer excitement, until the great locomotive thundered down the roadbed and jumped upon the girder bridge.

Just as he made the leap that was to decide his fate he saw the white face of the engineer, who was leaning far out of the cab window glaring straight at him.

The fireman was swinging out by the iron handles attached to the side of the cab and of the tender.

Then flinging the lantern from him, Tom sprang downward at the next iron girder.

His fingers closed on the cold iron, his body swung under him; and for a moment it seemed as if his hold would slip.

But no; his grip held firm long enough for him to throw one arm across the girder, and there he oscillated a few times like the pendulum of a dying clock, and at last he hung straight downward above the roaring river.

CHAPTER IV.

TOM ESCAPES FROM A DESPERATE SITUATION.

Tom heard the smash of glass as the lantern was struck by the pilot of the locomotive and shivered to pieces.

He felt the steel framework of the girder bridge tremble under the big engine as it passed over him, the hot cinders and scalding drops of water falling for a second around him.

It seemed to him that the long train would never pass, and yet but a few seconds elapsed before they were gone and he was free to climb back on top of the girder.

As he knelt clinging to the iron with both hands, shivering as if with an ague from the reaction which now set in, he strained his misty eyes ahead for a sight of the train in the darkness.

Had his mission failed and the cars gone into the river? He could not tell, yet it seemed to him he must have heard the terrible crash they would have made in falling.

Slowly he dragged himself to the outer edge of the girder bridge and straddled one of the rails.

To save his life he could not return to the solid ground by leaping from girder to girder as he had done to meet the train.

He had no light now to guide such a course, and his nerves would have failed him.

So he just dragged himself along the rail, surmounting each cross-piece as he came to it.

It was slow and laborious, but it was safe and sure.

In this way he finally reached the masonry and stepped up on to the roadbed.

In the meantime the locomotive had been brought to a standstill within a yard or two of the broken culvert.

The engineer and his fireman leaped to the ground and gazed down into the chasm whose peril they had escaped by the noble act of Tom Collingwood.

"My heavens!" gasped the engineer, "we barely missed it. That signal alone saved us. It seemed to be a boy that swung it, and heaven pardon us, we ran him down."

"Nothing could have saved him out there on the girders," said the fireman. "No power on earth could have stopped the train before it struck him."

"He is a fine young hero, whoever he is."

At that moment up stepped Bob Preston.

"Hello, my lad," exclaimed the engineer, almost startled by his sudden appearance out of the gloom. "You're not—no, no, you could not be the boy who signaled me and saved the train."

"No, sir," replied Bob, cheerfully, for he was rejoiced to know that the express was safe; "that was Tom Collingwood, my chum."

"Then heaven save his soul," said the engineer, taking off his cap with a feeling of respect toward the boy he supposed to be lying crushed and mangled at that moment upon the girder bridge.

"What do you mean?" demanded Bob, turning white at the words. "You do not mean that—"

"He is dead, my lad. We ran him down in the middle of the girder bridge. He could not escape unless he had jumped into the river, and he did not do that, for I was looking down at him when the pilot smashed the lantern and went over him like a flash."

Bob grabbed the begrimed engineer by the sleeve, looked pathetically into his face, and then he burst into tears.

At that moment the conductor came running up, followed by the express agent, baggage men, one or two postal clerks and others.

"What's the trouble?" asked the train mogul.

The engineer pointed to the broken culvert.

"My gracious!" cried the conductor, "you were signaled just in time it seems."

"Yes," said the engineer, "I was. By a boy, the comrade of this young fellow," pointing to the weeping Bob. "He saved the express at the cost of his life."

"At the cost of his life?" ejaculated the conductor.

"Yes. He gave the signal from the center of the bridge, and—the locomotive was upon him before you could say Jack Robinson. It was hard luck for the young hero, but he should have jumped to the river and taken his chance."

"Poor fellow," said the conductor, pityingly. "So he was your friend, young man?" he added, looking at Bob.

"Yes, sir," replied Preston, gulping down his grief.

"What was his name, and what is yours?"

"Tom Collingwood, and mine is Bob Preston."

"It will be sad news for you to carry to his parents. Where do you live?"

"He had no parents. He was an orphan like myself. I live in Forksville, and Tom and I roomed together."

"I suppose you both discovered the break in the culvert, and he went forward to head off the express?"

"Yes, sir. Tom crossed the river here on the wires to get a lantern we saw on the other side."

"You did not meet with the track walker, then?"

"No, sir."

"I can't understand why we were not held up at Block House 16, unless the culvert collapsed but a short time ago, after the track man had been over the line."

"I can't tell you when the break occurred. The culvert was down when we arrived, fifteen or twenty minutes ago. Tom telegraphed the train despatcher's office at Forksville and had the up local, No. 23, held back."

"He did? He was an operator, then? How happened he to have the instruments?"

"We had no instruments."

"You had none!" exclaimed the surprised official. "How then did you get into communication with the train despatcher's office?"

As Bob started to explain, a number of passengers came up and quite a crowd surrounded Preston.

Many of the passengers shuddered as they began to realize from a glance at the broken culvert the danger they had escaped.

At that moment the whistle of a locomotive was heard on the north side of the break in the line.

An engine and a single car, having on board the division superintendent and several other railroad men, were coming out of the cut.

A great deal of anxiety was felt in the yards at Forksville over the fate of the night express.

The operator in the train despatcher's office had, as we have seen, tried to get into communication with the night man at Block House 16.

He had just received the answer to his call when the whistle of the express caused Tom Collingwood to disconnect the wire, and he did not bring the ends together again.

The operator, therefore, could not talk to the man at Block House 16, and remained in ignorance of the state of affairs south of the culvert.

The division superintendent was notified, and he ordered one of the yard locomotives to be hitched on to a car, and started for the scene of trouble.

Bob had just finished his story of how Tom had telegraphed to Forksville without instruments when Tom came up on the outskirts of the crowd.

He supposed that Bob was the center of attraction and sprang onto the pilot of the locomotive to see what was going on.

"Hi, there, Bob," he shouted.

Bob swung around as if he had been shot and saw his chum standing well above the crowd.

"Tom! Tom!" he cried, in great joy, "you were not killed, then?"

"Killed! Certainly not."

The engineer, fireman, conductor and others turned their gaze on Collingwood.

The two former fairly gaped at Tom, for it seemed to be the ghost of the lad they thought they had run down.

"Is that the boy who saved the train?" asked the conductor. "The one you thought you ran down on the girder bridge?"

The engineer pushed his way up to Tom and saw that he was good flesh and blood.

"Give me your hand, my lad," he cried with earnest thankfulness. "How ever did you manage to escape?"

Tom explained.

"Well, you have a wonderful nerve for a boy of your years," said the engineer admirably, and every one present echoed the sentiment.

Somebody called for three cheers for Tom Collingwood and they were given with a will.

By this time the division superintendent appeared on the edge of the opposite side of the culvert.

He had found the senseless track walker, whom he ordered to be carried to the car.

He saw that the night express had been halted at the very brink of disaster, and he felt mighty thankful.

He shouted across the chasm, and the conductor stepped up and replied to him, detailing the circumstances as far as he knew them.

"Where is the boy?" asked the super.

"We've got him here."

"What did you say his name is?"

"Tom Collingwood. He lives in Forksville."

"Tell him to call at my office to-morrow morning."

"Yes, sir."

"Notify the passengers that they will be transferred in the course of an hour to a train that will be backed up here from Forksville. We'll have material brought here to temporarily bridge the break so the people, baggage, express and mail matter can be safely transferred across to this side."

Tom was made a lion of by the passengers as soon as the facts became generally known throughout the train.

A number of well-known politicians were on the express, and they had Tom brought into the smoking compartment of one of the sleepers, and got the story from his own lips.

One of them went through the cars and collected \$150 for Tom.

They themselves added enough to bring the purse up to \$500.

This was presented to him with the general acknowledgment of the passengers for what he had done in their behalf.

About half-past eleven the train that was to carry the passengers, their baggage, the mail and other matter to their destination, appeared with a flat car attached bearing a working crew and the material necessary to temporarily bridge the chasm.

In due time everybody and everything was transferred to the waiting train, which started north towards Forksville.

Inside of ten minutes the two boys were set down at the station in town and then the train went on.

The very first thing they did was to make a break for an all-night restaurant and order a square meal.

The way they disposed of the eatables made the waiter think they hadn't eaten in a week.

"I don't think I ever ate anything that tasted half so good," said Bob, pushing his plate away.

"Nor I," agreed Tom; "but that's because we were so desperately hungry."

"We were hungry, for a fact. Now I feel real comfortable," said Bob in a contented tone. "We had the adventure of our lives to-night, or rather you had, for I played only second fiddle in the affair. If we decide to go west, I'll bet we'll not come across anything more thrilling. You had as narrow a squeak for your life in front of that locomotive as you'll ever have if you live to tell the tale. I'll bet you couldn't do it again and come out as you have done without a scratch."

"I guess you're right, Bob," answered Tom. "Well, if you've eaten all you want to, we'll start for home. I'm tired."

So the boys paid their checks, and half an hour later were sound asleep in bed in their boarding-house.

CHAPTER V.

TOM AND BOB LEARN SOMETHING NEW ABOUT THE MINING INDUSTRY.

The morning papers of Forksville had graphic stories of the escape of the night express from destruction at the broken culvert.

Full justice was done Tom Collingwood, who was called a real hero, and whose thrilling experience in signaling the engineer of the express from his precarious foothold in the center of the girder bridge was set forth in glowing language by the newspaper men.

In fact, Tom was the most talked-of person that morning in Forksville.

He reported at the factory at the regular time, worked two hours, during which time he was the object of much admiration from his fellow workmen, and then left to keep the appointment with the division superintendent of the Midland Central Railroad at his office in the yard.

The superintendent had a long talk with him, at the close of which he assured Tom that he would be suitably rewarded by the company for his valuable services.

The division superintendent had already telegraphed the facts to the general manager of the road at New York city, and he now prepared a fuller account to be forwarded in an official envelope as required by the regulations.

At the next meeting of the directors Tom Collingwood received a vote of thanks for saving the night express, and the sum of \$5,000, both being forwarded in care of the division superintendent, who presented the money and the letter of thanks and commendation signed by the president of the road to Collingwood.

"You're rich, Tom," said Bob, when his chum showed him the check. "That's \$5,500 you've made by your nerve in the face of a great emergency. Still it hardly pays for the great risk you ran on the girder bridge. You came within an ace of being killed."

"I didn't do it with any expectation of being rewarded for it, Bob. No amount of money would have tempted me on the bridge that night. I simply considered it to be my duty to try and save all those lives that were at stake in the train, even at the risk of my own life. I am sure you would have done the same, Bob, if you had been in my shoes."

"The spirit might have been willing, but whether my courage would have stood the test I cannot say. I think you have a great deal more sand than me. At any rate, your courage can never be questioned after what you did that night."

Tom smiled and said nothing.

He put the money in a couple of savings banks, for no one bank would accept over \$3,000, and worked as diligently as ever at his trade.

That is not saying that he had given up the idea of going West and embarking in the mining business.

He was bent on taking Bob with him, and Preston hadn't come to a definite decision in the matter as yet.

One evening when Tom and Bob entered the dining-room they found a new boarder at the table.

The boarding mistress had given him the vacant seat alongside of Collingwood.

The boys regarded the addition to the establishment with not a little curiosity.

He was an old man whose skin was tanned to the color and consistency of leather.

His small, bright eyes were deeply sunken under beetling brows.

His hair was an iron gray in color, and he had plenty of it, for it hung down several inches below the collar of his rough-looking sack coat.

His seamed and horny hands told of hard work in the open air and lots of it.

Altogether, he was a queer looking old chap and naturally attracted some attention.

He looked at the two boys who, as we have already remarked, faced each other across the table, and his twinkling eyes took them in from head to foot at a glance.

The boarding mistress introduced the new boarder to them as Mr. Triggs.

The boys acknowledged the introduction with their usual politeness, but as soon as they were seated, Bob carelessly took up his fork and telegraphed to Tom:

"Queer-looking old chap, this Mr. Triggs, don't you think?"

"Rather odd," replied Collingwood in the Morse alphabet.

"Where do you s'pose he came from?"

"Search me. Maybe from the West."

"Why don't you ask him? He might know something about diggings."

"I will after a while. Here comes our soup. I hope it's better than what we had yesterday."

The boys got away with their soup in silence.

Then Bob signalled again to call Tom's attention to the following:

"Mr. Triggs is putting away the roast beef as though it was as tender as spring chicken and not as tough as the product of a tannery. He must be used to such fare. I'll bet you a nickel he's from the G. W."

G. W. meant Golden West with Bob, and his reading had given him the impression that all miners subsisted on dried flapjack and a few other things prepared after a primitive fashion.

Tom didn't answer, as he was hungry, and lost no time in attacking the aforesaid roast beef, which was not quite as tough as Bob had intimated, though it was not tender by any means, for the boarding mistress never bought anything in this line but the round, because it was cheaper than the better cuts.

After the new boarder had finished his meal he rose from his chair like a person afflicted with the rheumatism and limped slowly from the room.

His room adjoined the one occupied by the boys, and he was so long in getting up to the third story that Tom, who left the table before Bob, caught up with him just as he struck the landing.

Mr. Triggs took the key of his room out of his pocket, and in fumbling for the keyhole, he dropped it.

As he stood looking helplessly at it, Tom, seeing his predicament, darted forward, picked it up, inserted it into the hole and unlocked the door.

"There you are, Mr. Triggs," he said cheerfully.

"Thank you, young man," replied the new boarder. "I've got the rheumatism bad, and it's mighty hard for me to bend my legs. Your name is Collingwood, I think?"

"Yes, sir."

"Will you come in?"

Tom hesitated.

"I expect my friend upstairs in a moment."

"Leave the door open, and when he comes call him in."

"What's the matter with you paying us a visit? Our room is larger."

"Do you object to smoking?" asked the old man.

"Not at all," smiled Tom.

Mr. Triggs got his pipe and tobacco pouch and accompanied Collingwood to his room.

They were barely seated, and the visitor was filling his pipe-bowl, when Bob bustled in.

"Mr. Trigg invited me into his room, but I thought he'd better come in here where there's more room," explained Tom.

"That's right," answered Bob, taking a chair.

"Don't you lads smoke?" asked the old man, looking at each in turn.

"No, sir," replied Tom. "I don't think it's a good habit to acquire."

"I've always smoked since I can remember, and it hasn't done me any harm," said the visitor.

"I had an idea that you might be from the West, Mr. Triggs," said Tom, hoping that his surmise was correct.

"Your idea is correct. I'm from Colorado," replied the old man, striking a match and lighting his pipe.

"Lived there some time, I suppose," ventured Tom.

"I ain't lived no place consecutive like. Been all over the West from the Missouri to the Coast, and from Rio Grande to the Klondyke."

"You must be well acquainted with the country."

"I guess I can find my way about without a guide," replied Mr. Triggs with a grim smile.

"Been to the gold diggings, haven't you?" asked Tom, eagerly.

"A few. Young man, I've spent nigh to forty years prospectin' and diggin' in the gold districts."

"Forty years!" ejaculated Tom. "I should think you'd be a Monte Cristo by this time."

"A who?"

"A Monte Cristo," repeated Tom.

"Never heard of him. Who was he?"

"He was the richest man in the world, according to the story."

"What mine did he own?"

"He didn't own any mine. He found his money on a island in the Mediterranean Sea. It was hidden in a cave and he discovered the secret."

"Hum!"

"Have you been prospecting and digging gold for forty years?" asked Tom, not able to associate such an idea with a man whose seedy appearance showed that he was not abundantly supplied with money.

"It might be nearer thirty-five," nodded the visitor.

"And haven't you made your fortune?" said Tom in a tone of astonishment.

"I've made several of them, young man."

"Several of them?"

Mr. Triggs nodded.

"Several of them, mostly, I'm sorry to say, for other people."

"Why not for yourself?"

"Because sharper men than me done me out of my rights."

"How could they? I thought when a man took a claim it was his, and all he dug out of it was his."

"That's correct. But the best part of the gold is way underground and must be got at by modern methods. A man who discovers a rich claim has got to have considerable capital to make his property pay. The prospector who discovers a valuable lode is not always the person who makes the most out of it. He ought to, but he don't. He has to interest capital to develop his claim, and the men with money see to it, as a rule, that they get the lion's share."

All this was news, and not encouraging news either, to both Tom and Bob, and had a depressing effect on their golden visions.

They thought that the only equipment a miner needed was a pick and shovel, cradle and a few other things, together with a blanket, a knapsack to carry supplies, and a revolver, knife and rifle for his protection.

"Isn't gold found near the surface of the ground?" asked Tom.

"Sure it is, in new districts never worked before. Those are called placer diggin's. But the real gold ore, the rich veins and lodes, amountin' to fortunes, run in all directions at some distance below the surface, more times than not hundreds of feet down. You have to sink shafts and bore tunnels to get at it in paying quantities. This requires machinery, and machinery is expensive, especially when it has to be brought hundreds of miles out into the wilds, part of the way by railroad and part of the way on the back of mules. Then when you get your ore on the dump at the mouth of your shaft or tunnel it has to be sacked and sent to the mill to be crushed and smelted. The gold and silver and other metals, as shown in the assay of your samples, have to be separated and kept track of. Modern mining is a great business, young man, and it's growing greater every day. Great fortunes have been made out of small beginnings, are being made at this moment, and will be made in the future out West. It is the greatest country in the world."

Mr. Triggs, having finished his pipe, said he felt sleepy.

"We'll continue this conversation another time, young gentlemen," he said, rising from his chair laboriously. "P'raps I can induce you to go West with me when I get better of my rheumatism. If I can I'll make your fortunes."

With those words he bade them good-night and retired to his own room.

CHAPTER VI.

THE VALLEY OF GOLD AND THE PATH TO GOOD LUCK.

Left to themselves, Tom and Bob looked at each other like people just awakened from a pleasant dream of affluence to find themselves still facing the stern reality of common, everyday experience.

"He doesn't talk like the books we've read," said Tom, who was the first to break the silence.

"No. His conversation was all Greek to me. Mining must be carried on differently to what it was when those books were written. According to the stories it was easy to dig for gold. Every time the hero washed out a pan of dirt he found some golden specks which he put away in his pouch."

"Yes, and he found nuggets of pure gold in pockets, where the action of the water had washed the little specks until they accumulated into a lump. Nothing was said about milling or smelting it to get other stuff out of it. It was the real thing already. Say, Bob, do you think those books didn't tell the truth?"

"How can I tell? I believe things were different then, as I said before."

"Mr. Triggs said gold could be found near the surface in new places. That must be what the stories referred to. I remember now that I read of the gold diggings in California and parts of Nevada, and hundreds of miners dug gold out of the ground with pick and shovel, and washed it out in pans and cradles. I saw many pictures showing how they did it, so the books were true enough, I guess. If we go West we must hunt up a new place, and dig gold as they used to do."

"He said if we'd go West with him he'd make our fortunes. You heard that, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"How can he make our fortunes when he can't make his own after thirty-five years' trying?"

"Ask me something easier, Bob. He said he made several fortunes for other people."

"But those people were smarter than him."

"It's a wonder he wouldn't get to be smart after being thirty-five years at the business."

"Some people are born chumps and never get smart."

"That must be the trouble with him. I don't think anybody could fool us out of a rich claim if we found one."

"I should hope not."

"I'd hang onto such a thing with both feet."

"So would I."

"We must talk with him again on the subject. I want to find out all I can before I make a start."

"That's my idea. We don't know any more about the West and mining than what we've read. It's a good thing to pump a man who's been on the ground."

"There must be thousands of people around Goldfield, and Tonopah, and Bullfrog, and other places in Nevada engaged in mining."

"I should think there was."

"I saw a list containing the names of hundreds of persons who had got rich by investing a few dollars in mining stock."

"I'd rather stake out a claim and dig gold for myself than buy stock that I didn't know anything about."

"So would I. That's what we proposed doing, isn't it?"

"That's right," nodded Bob. "But when we settled on that you didn't have any more money than me. Now you're worth all of \$6,000."

"What's \$6,000?"

"It's a lot of money. I wish I had it."

"One could make \$6,000 in a few months out of a rich claim."

"If I was sure of that I'd pack up and start West with you to-morrow."

"We'll talk it over with Mr. Triggs. I guess I'll go to bed."

"What's the matter with a game of pinochle first?"

"I'll go you."

They drew up alongside the table, got out the cards and commenced the game.

Before they were half through they heard some one calling.

"Listen," said Tom. "I believe that's Mr. Triggs."

It proved to be the old man's voice, and Tom went to see what he wanted.

He proved to be very ill.

He had a pain and a smothered feeling around the heart.

Tom decided that he ought to have a doctor.

He called Bob and sent him out to fetch one who lived in the block.

While he was gone Tom did everything he could to relieve Mr. Triggs, and under his ministrations the old man grew better.

When he was able to talk he expressed his gratitude to the boy.

"That's all right," replied Tom. "You don't suppose I'd see you suffer without trying to help you all I could?"

Then Bob appeared with the physician.

He talked to the old man and examined him carefully.

Then he left a prescription.

"What's the matter with him?" Tom asked the doctor on the way to the front door.

"Rheumatism. It's working up toward his heart. I've got to head it off, if I can, or it will be likely to kill him. You had better not tell him yet that he's in a dangerous state. Time enough for that if matters get worse."

The boys agreed to take turns watching the old man that night.

Toward morning he grew much better, but the chances of his leaving his bed that day were remote.

Tom notified the boarding mistress, and she said she would look after her boarder during the day.

Several days passed and Mr. Triggs held his own, then he had another bad attack.

The doctor, who had been calling daily, was summoned in a hurry, and he did what he could for the old man.

Afterward he took Tom aside and told him that Mr. Triggs couldn't live long.

"Another attack will probably finish him," said the physician, "and he's certain to have it soon. Possibly inside of twenty-four hours. You had better tell him to settle his worldly affairs in anticipation of the worst."

Tom was sorry to receive this report from the doctor, and he didn't like the duty of breaking the intelligence to the sufferer.

Mr. Triggs, however, made it easy for him.

The old chap had a strong suspicion that his hours were numbered, so when Tom returned to his bedside he said:

"What did the doctor say to you?"

"He said you are a pretty sick man," replied the boy.

"Humph! He said I was goin' to die, didn't he?"

"He isn't sure that you'll recover."

"He knows I'm to pass in my chips. I saw it in his face. I know it, too. The rheumatism has gone to my heart and it will finish me."

Tom made no reply.

"Look here, my lad, you've been very kind to an old chap like me who's a stranger to you. So has your friend. Somehow or another I've taken a fancy to you. I meant to persuade you to go West with me if I got well. I intended to make your fortune as well as my own. It is too late now for me to make my own. The chance has passed away from me forever. But I can point out the path to good luck to you. Listen: A short time before this disease attacked me I was prospectin' among the mountains of Colorado, far from the beaten tracks. I followed it and it led me to the very top of the range. Here before my eyes I was startled by the sight of a gigantic rock fashioned in the perfect form of a human skull. As much as twenty years since I had heard about that peculiar rock, which pointed the way, I was told, to a basin in the range called Death Valley, probably named on account of the skull rock which seemed to guard the path leadin' down into it. It was an old Indian who told me about it, and he said the valley literally teemed with surface gold. I made half a dozen trips at various times to those mountains to try and locate the skull rock, but never succeeded in findin' it until this, the seventh time, I struck the right path. Descendin' to the valley, which I found as the Indian had described it, I soon saw that the place gave abundant evidences of the presence of gold. The precious metal appeared to be everywhere. There were a score of outcroppin's of hidden veins and lodes, while thousands on thousands of dollars' worth of gold could be washed from the surface dirt alone. I saw that I had discovered a new El Dorado that would prove to be the richest diggin's in the West. A stream of water flowed through the center of the valley which would offer all the necessary facilities for washin' the loose surface

gold. The valley was so small that when I had staked out the claims to which the law entitled me I had covered the whole place. In a word, I had practically become the owner of Death Valley. I had merely a prospector's outfit with me, and therefore could do nothin' at the moment save secure samples of the outcroppin's from different places in the valley. With these in my bag I left the valley, expectin' soon to return with the necessary tools to work the surface gold over and thus secure the capital to enable me to sink a shaft for the richer metal below. It was fated that I never should realize my dream of wealth, for shortly after my return to Denver, where I duly recorded my right to possession of the valley, the papers provin' which are in my valise in yonder corner, I was taken down with rheumatism. A physician advised me to go East for change of air, and I came here, expectin' to get well of my ailment. Instead of which I am now about to die. As I haven't a relative in the wide world, I have decided to make you my heir. To make you the owner of the New Eldorado in Death Valley. Bring me pen and paper and I will draw up the paper that shall be my will."

Tom, much astonished at the remarkable turn of events, and hardly realizing the great importance to him of the document the old man was about to prepare, got the articles from his room.

"Now, prop me up on the pillow," said Mr. Triggs.

Tom did so.

The old prospector and miner then wrote out a short will leaving everything of which he died possessed to Tom Collingwood.

"Now, my lad, go downstairs and ask the landlady and her husband to step up to witness this paper that it may be a legal document," said the old man.

Tom did so, and the parties in question presently made their appearance.

"Being satisfied that I am about to die," said Mr. Triggs to them, "I wish you to understand that this paper is my last will and testament which I have made out in favor of Tom Collingwood here, in consideration of his kindness to a friendless old man. Please sign it as witnesses."

They did so, wondering what their new boarder had to leave the boy.

After they had withdrawn Mr. Triggs asked Tom to open his valise and take out the long, yellow envelope he would find there.

Collingwood found it without difficulty and handed it to the old man.

"Here are the papers establishin' my right to Death Valley," said the miner. "You see, they bear the endorsement of the county clerk showin' that they have been recorded. Here on this paper are the directions to find what I have called 'The Path to Good Luck.' It's the only path that leads to the Giant's Skull and the golden valley beyond. The bearin's are marked by compass, and you must provide yourself with a small one when you start for the mountains. The range itself is west-southwest of Denver, and Death Valley is situated about the center of what is known as the Black Triplets—three tall peaks close together that look much larger than the rest of the range. Enterin' the range through a long, windin' valley, you will come to the foothills of the first of the Triplets. Then you must begin to take your bearin's by compass in accordance with this paper. They will lead you directly to the 'Path of Good Luck.' As soon as you strike the top of the mountains and see the Giant's Skull on your left, all you have to do is to descend by the path and the valley of gold is before you. Do you understand?"

"I do," replied Tom, who was nevertheless rather bewildered by the strange facts presented to him.

"That is all. I feel a bit exhausted now and will try to sleep. Be careful of the papers, and see that you do not mislay the directions pointin' the way to the Giant's Skull. Without them you might search in vain for years for the 'Path to Good Luck.'"

The old man turned over on his side and closed his eyes, while Tom sat down to think out the remarkable story about the "Path to Good Luck" leading to the golden Death Valley by the way of the Giant's Skull, and to wait for Bob Preston to show up.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PASSING OF MR. TRIGGS.

Somehow or another Tom thought the circumstances of the case bore a resemblance to the romance of "The Count of Monte Cristo."

It was an old white-haired man, dying from the effects of long confinement in the dungeons of the fortress d'If, that gave the hero of the story the directions to find the famous treasure hidden on the island of Monte Cristo.

It was an old man dying from the rheumatism contracted in searching for the golden treasure of the earth, who had just given the key to what he claimed to be a fabulous fortune.

In each instance the treasure was only to be got at by following certain directions.

Edmund Dantes, in the story, became wealthy almost beyond the dreams of avarice.

Was he, plain Tom Collingwood, the hero of no romance, fated to become the real Monte Cristo of actual life?

It seemed too incredible to be true, like the dreams of a hasheesh eater.

And yet there was nothing unsubstantial about the title deeds to Death Valley, with the recorder's stamp and signature on them.

He opened the yellow envelope and looked the documents in the case over carefully to assure himself that there was no fiction about them.

As well as he could understand, they appeared to be perfectly genuine.

"The Path to Good Luck," he muttered. "The only way by which the valley of gold can be reached. It is well named. If I was superstitious I could easily find a weird connection between the Giant's Skull overlooking Death Valley and the fate of poor Mr. Triggs."

While Tom was sitting in a brown study the door of the room, which stood slightly ajar, was pushed quietly open and Bob appeared.

Observing that the old man appeared to be asleep, and not wishing to disturb him, he tiptoed over to the side of his chum.

"Tom," he whispered, "you're not asleep?"

"No," replied Collingwood, straightening up. "I was just dreaming."

"You were not asleep, but you were dreaming. That's pretty good. What were you dreaming of?" grinned Bob.

"Gold."

"Gold?"

"Yes. That I was the richest boy in the world."

"That's a pleasant kind of dream."

"Yes, especially if you wake up and find it a fact."

"You've woke up and discovered that it wasn't a fact."

"I don't know about that. I may be the richest boy in the world in a little while for all you and I know."

"You may if you go out West and find a mountain of gold."

"A valley of gold may be as good as a mountain full of it."

"Hardly. I'd rather have the mountain."

"It's easier to dig gold out of the valley than out of a mountain."

"If it's near the surface, I suppose."

Tom got up and looked at the old man.

"He'll sleep a while. He's breathing easily. Come in our room. I want to tell you something."

So they adjourned to the other room, leaving both doors partially open.

"Mr. Triggs has been telling me a wonderful story."

"He has?"

"Yes. The doctor says he's going to die, and the old man himself is certain of the fact."

"That's too bad," replied Bob, soberly.

"Yes, it's hard luck for him, for he has told me that he discovered a valley teeming with gold just before he was taken down with the rheumatism."

"He told you that. He must be out of his head," replied Bob, incredulously.

"I don't think he is. I believe he told me the truth."

"What makes you think he did?" asked Bob, with awakened interest.

"Because I've seen the papers giving him title to the ground."

"You have?"

"I have."

"And he said the property was full of gold?" said Bob, eagerly.

"Yes. He's seen the gold with his own eyes. He has samples of it in his valise, and the assay receipt shows that the samples he submitted for analysis are very rich, several hundreds of dollars per ton."

"Gracious! And who will come in for all this wealth when he is dead?"

"Me, and incidentally yourself."

"You!" gasped Bob.

"He hasn't a relative in the world to lay claim to it. Because I've been good to him, he said, he has willed it all to me. There is the document," and Tom opened the yellow envelope, took out the paper signed by Thomas Triggs in a clear hand, and witnessed by the boarding mistress and her husband, and handed it to his chum.

Bob glanced over it in a mechanical kind of way, astonished beyond measure.

"My goodness!" he exclaimed. "If it's only true about the valley of gold you will become a millionaire."

"I hope so. And don't forget that you're coming into a good share of it yourself. The old man expects me to let you in on it, and I would do it anyway. Here are the papers showing that he owns the property beyond any doubt. Ownership is claimed under the Mineral Bearing Land Act of the government. Everything is regular down to the stamp and signature of the proper official at Denver."

Bob was quite overcome by this evidence of good luck which had come Tom's way, and, to a certain extent, his own.

Tom then told him a few of the facts disclosed by Mr. Triggs, but he did not say anything about the valley being hard to find, or the "Path to Good Luck" with its wonderful natural phenomenon, the Giant's Skull.

On general principles, lest the secret might in some way get out, he kept that part to himself along with the paper of directions.

There was plenty of time to acquaint Bob with those important details when they got upon the ground.

Tom had barely concluded what he had to say before his sharp ears heard the old man moving in his bed and he hastened into the room.

He gave Mr. Triggs his medicine, and some nourishment, and then sat in the chair.

Bob came in after a while, but Tom told him to go to bed, so as to be in shape to relieve him around midnight.

Tom didn't go to work next morning, but remained at the house to care for the old prospector, as he considered it his duty to do now, and Mr. Triggs expressed his gratitude to the boy.

The doctor came in and looked at his patient, left a new prescription and departed after telling Tom that the old man would linger along until he got another acute attack, which was likely to happen at any time.

During the morning Mr. Triggs was unusually bright, and Tom told him that he thought he might fool the physician and get well after all.

The old man, however, shook his head.

"I'm booked through," he said, with a curious smile, "without lay-off privileges. When the summons comes I must go."

Then he went on to explain matters more fully about how Tom and his friend were to proceed in relation to the golden valley after they reached the city of Denver.

"No one can dispute your title to the valley," he said. "But as soon as the news gets out to the public there will be an immediate rush to take up claims on the surroundin' hills."

"Nobody will be able to find their way to the valley except by accident, according to your statement," replied Tom.

"At present that holds good, but as soon as you begin carryin' your gold down the mountain you will soon leave a clear trail to guide any one to the right path, and once it is spotted the secret will cease to be one. But that fact need not worry you. You must first of all gather in as much of the surface gold as you can get at yourselves in secret. Then you had better look around for honest capitalists and form a company for properly workin' the ground. The assay receipt I already have might well be backed up by other assays of fresh samples, and on the strength of these you must make the best terms you are able to with one or two experienced minin' men. You must investigate the men before you approach them on the subject. The right people will treat you white. I have been unfortunate in my own selections. Once I turned down a good man in favor of a pair of sharpers, and thereby lost a considerable fortune. Remember, you are a boy, inexperienced in mines and minin' matters, and will be regarded as a good thing to fleece if you should strike the wrong people. In any case, you can't be too careful. Insist on havin' your rights, and above all be sure when you form the company to hold on to the majority of the stock—say three-quarters. Then nothin' can be done without your sanction. Do not accept any offer to sell out your claims, no matter what the offer, until after a thorough development of the property has established its prospective value. In

any case, I think from my estimate of the ore likely to be found that you would be foolish to dispose of your rights even for several million. It is bound to turn in to you, and those associated with you in its development, immense dividends in the course of time. You should have a steady income from the property as long as you live. What more could a young man of your age ask?"

Tom listened eagerly to Mr. Triggs and resolved to profit by his advice.

He asked many questions about the West, and received truthful answers that opened his eyes more to conditions as they were out there than any book, however well written, could have done.

When Bob returned from work after five o'clock, Mr. Triggs was doing quite well under the circumstances, and neither of the lads thought he would die for several days at least.

Bob stood watch from seven to midnight and then Tom relieved him.

About three in the morning the old man was attacked again, and Tom sent Bob for the doctor in great haste.

Tom used all the means at his disposal to rally Mr. Triggs, but his efforts were without avail.

The old prospector and miner died before Bob got back with the physician.

Tom told the doctor that he would see that he was paid for his services, though the physician had attended the old man without any great hopes of receiving any money, for he saw that he seemed to be poor and without friends.

Collingwood hired an undertaker and had Mr. Triggs buried in a respectable way in a grave that he bought for the purpose.

He took possession of all the old man's effects, and settled with the boarding mistress what she claimed to be her due.

After paying the doctor, who cut his bill in half, Tom found he had laid out altogether about \$400 on the old miner.

Then he had a long talk with Bob, during which he proposed that they should proceed to Denver without delay, and there make preparations to go to the mountain range where the Black Triplets were and search for the path that led past the Giant Skull to Death Valley.

Bob agreed to the proposition, so they threw up their jobs at the cutlery works, packed a couple of suit-cases, and after bidding the boarding mistress and boarders good-by, took a train one morning for Denver via Chicago.

CHAPTER VIII.

TOM'S NERVE SAVES A LIFE.

Tom and Bob remained three days in Chicago to see a few of the sights of the big Western city, and then started for Denver via Omaha and Council Bluffs on the Missouri River.

They were landed in Denver in less than twenty-four hours after leaving the Windy City, and went to a hotel frequented by commercial travelers, theatrical people and the like, where the tariff was reasonable.

There was much to interest the two boys in the capital and chief city of Colorado.

It occupies a series of plateaus, facing the mountains, and commanding a grand and beautiful view.

Through the clear mountain atmosphere may be seen the snow-capped range extending more than 200 miles, its rich purple streaked with dazzling white, and here and there draped in soft, transparent haze.

The boys were especially interested in the branch mint, which was employed in the melting and assaying of bullion, which is returned to depositors in the form of bars with the weight and fineness stamped upon them.

"How long will it be before some of our gold is coming in here?" said Bob, gazing upon piles of wedges of the pure metal. "It makes my mouth water to look at those bars. Just think what they're worth in coin or good bank bills."

"If half of what Mr. Triggs told me about the richness of Death Valley turns out to be true, we'll have wedges like some of this yonder to burn," replied Tom.

"You mean to melt," laughed Bob.

"Of course. Come, let's go over to the Denver Smelting and Refining Works. We can't afford much time for the sights, so we must get about lively."

That day they also visited the office where Mr. Triggs had filed his claim in Death Valley, and exhibiting a certified copy of the old prospector's will, which he had deposited in

the Forksville court-house, Tom laid claim to Mr. Trigg's rights to the property.

They spent two days sightseeing and then got down to business.

A portion of their outfit, which consisted of a suit and several dark blue shirts for roughing it in the mountains, a knapsack apiece for carrying a change of underwear, supplies, and various odds and ends, a pair of good revolvers and a plentiful supply of cartridges they purchased in Denver and packed the same for transportation by rail to the Clear Creek mining district, where they proposed to purchase horses, tools and supplies for their expedition to the Black Triplets.

It was only a comparatively short ride by the train to the settlement at Clear Creek, which they found to be a good-sized town, but distinctly rough in its general character, being built mostly of one-story wooden buildings fronting chiefly on one long, main street.

It was a busy, wide-awake place, and it looked as if there was something doing here all the time, night and day.

Here they got their first insight into the real wild and woolly West.

The town was overrun with all sorts and conditions of men, from the well-dressed gambler down to the roughly appareled mining man and prospector.

The boys put up at the Clear Creek Hotel, a two-story building, the ground floor of which was laid out with a big bar-room, with a dining-room attached, and a kitchen in the rear.

The office, so-called parlor and bed rooms were on the second floor.

"Say, there is considerable difference between this shack and the second-rate hotel we put up at in Denver," said Bob, after they had been shown to their rooms by an easy-going attache of the establishment.

"I should say it is," replied Tom, looking around the apartment, which was not much larger than a good-sized box, and seemed to be built on the same principle, the board walls and the ceiling being without plaster, and merely covered by a cheap wall paper.

There was no room for their trunk, but they had been told by the proprietor that it would be placed in a storeroom at the end of the floor, where it would be accessible to them at all times.

The bed was a collapsible iron one, barely wide enough to accommodate two.

The washstand was also of iron, with a tin bowl and pitcher, and a slop pail underneath.

A plain looking-glass was affixed to the wall with a shelf underneath and one drawer, which did duty for a dressing-case.

Two cheap looking chairs completed the furniture.

"Considering this is supposed to be the best hotel in Clear Creek, there isn't much style about it," grinned Bob, proceeding to wash his face.

"What do we care about style?" replied Tom. "Nobody puts on any here but the gents who run the gambling layouts, and I dare say that is part of their business. Everybody else is satisfied to go about in any old way. Some of those rough-looking fellows we meet on the way here may be rolling in wealth for all we know."

"That's no lie. The mines about here are panning out lots of gold. Did you see that string of wagons unloading sacks of ore into the freight cars? That stuff must represent a small mint of money."

"I saw the wagons. I s'pose we'll have to send our ore that way some day when we get down to real mining."

"No doubt about it. This town is the terminus of the railroad. All the ore dug up around about this district and beyond is shipped from here to Denver."

At that moment a bell sounded downstairs.

"Is that the dinner-bell?" asked Bob in a tone of anticipation. "I hope it is, for I feel kind of empty around the belt."

"I guess it is. Hello, what's this paper on the door?"

He looked at the writing and found that it indicated the meal hours.

Consulting his watch, he found that it was dinner hour.

"It means dinner, all right. Here's the meal schedule. You can see for yourself."

"Breakfast, five to eight," said Bob. "Dinner, twelve to one-thirty. Supper, six to nine. I wonder what's on the bill of fare?"

"If you're ready we'll go down and see."

They went down to the dining-room, which they reached

by way of a long hallway and a door at the end, thereby avoiding the barroom by which they found that most of the diners entered.

They were told by a woman at a desk near the main door to pick out seats for themselves at either of the two long tables.

They did so, and a young waitress immediately brought two plates of soup for them without waiting for orders.

Then she offered them their choice of roast beef or boiled mutton.

"Mutton for me," said Bob.

"I'll take roast beef," spoke up Tom.

The meat, with a good supply of vegetables, canned, of course, was laid before them in short order.

They finished up with rice pudding and coffee.

The dining-room filled up while they were at their meal, all present being men.

They came in singly, in pairs and in groups, and seemed to be known to one another.

Very little conversation was indulged in, all being intent on satisfying their hunger and getting away as soon as possible.

The majority had meal tickets, which were clipped by the woman at the desk as they passed out.

"This seems to be a restaurant as well as a hotel," remarked Bob.

"I guess it is. Things are run differently here to what they are East," replied Tom.

"I suppose we've got to show the card that the man gave us upstairs at the desk when we go out," said Bob.

"Sure. That's what he told us to do."

"No chance of getting any free meals here, is there?" chuckled Preston.

"Don't look like it," said Tom, leading the way to the desk, where the woman merely glanced at the cards and nodded.

"I s'pose we'd better do the town this afternoon and evening and make our purchases to-morrow," said Bob.

"Yes. We'll have to get the hang of things first, make some inquiries, and especially find out where we can buy the horses we need."

"Well, come on, then. Everybody is bound to pipe us off as tenderfoots. I shall be glad to get into our rough togs, if only to escape notice."

The boys left the hotel and started to make a tour of the long street.

They found all kinds of businesses in full blast.

There was the Clear Creek Bank within a few doors of the hotel, and the express office was next door to it.

The post-office was next to that, and as Tom had a postal order which he had sent addressed to himself from Denver, and Bob had one also to collect, they walked inside to get the money.

Then they discovered that they would have to be identified.

"How are we going to manage that?" said Bob to Tom. "Nobody knows us here."

"We'll have to return to the hotel and see if the proprietor can help us out," replied Tom.

So back to the hotel they went, but the proprietor had gone somewhere and it was impossible to see him for the present.

"Well, we'll have to let the matter stand till we see him later on," said Tom.

Accordingly, they devoted a couple of hours to walking up one side and down the other of the street.

"There are a lot of barrooms all right," observed Bob. "The halls announce long vaudeville shows at night. We'll have to take one of them in this evening. I should imagine that this is a red-hot town after dark."

"You can gamble on it that it is. That's when the games of chance are on in full blast. The men who work hard all day recreate under lamplight."

When they got back to the hotel they stated to the proprietor the quandary they were in over their money orders.

He asked them a few questions and then said he'd cash their orders himself.

They signed them and said they'd draw on him for the money as they wanted it.

Tom then made inquiries with respect to where they could get a couple of good horses for their journey to the Black Triplets, and the landlord referred them to a stable in a certain part of the town, giving them a note to the proprietor.

They went in to supper early, and then hung around the hotel till dark, when they started out to take in the sights by lamplight.

Clear Creek was a widely different sort of place at night from what it was during the daytime.

If anything it appeared to be more lively.

The saloons, gambling houses and music halls were wide open to the public, with flaring lights to attract attention.

Nearly all of them had some kind of a vaudeville show going on upon a small stage at the back of the barroom, and a distant view of the stage could be had from the street.

Chairs and tables were scattered around where the patrons could sit and drink and view the show at the same time.

There was one notorious hall called "The Eldorado."

It was situated well up the main street, and was not patronized by the better element.

Tom and Bob wandered into it because they didn't know any better.

They saw a show going on and that enticed them, so they took their seats at a table and ordered soft drinks when the waiter came around.

If they hadn't been boys this would have attracted notice and sarcasm from the habitués in their vicinity.

It happened that their table was well off to one side and within earshot of another table occupied by four of as desperate looking ruffians as the boys had ever seen in their lives.

The leading spirit was a six-foot rascal with red hair and beard.

He looked capable of any crime in the calendar.

As a matter of fact, he was a desperado of the first water, and was wanted by the sheriff of the county for a murder which had been traced to him.

His name was Bill Higgings.

He showed his nerve by coming into the town that afternoon and taking up his quarters at "The Eldorado," where he would be surrounded by friends.

Two deputy sheriffs had got wind of his presence at the place and went there to capture him at the risk of their lives.

They were disguised as miners and approached the table where Higgings sat with his three companions without their identity being suspected.

Tom and Bob were watching a nimble-footed song and dance artist doing a lively turn on the stage, when suddenly the place was thrown into confusion by the daring action of the deputy sheriffs.

Both had drawn their revolvers when they stepped up to the table where the red-headed ruffian sat, and while one covered his associates, the other called on Higgings to throw up his hands.

"Great Scott, Tom!" cried Bob, in some dismay. "Let's sneak."

As the boys rose from their chairs a revolver cracked near by and the deputy who had the drop on Higgings staggered and dropped his arm.

In an instant the rascal's hand went to his hip and he flashed out his gun.

Quick as a wink he pointed it at the officer, and it would have been all over with him in a moment but that Tom, horrified at the probability of a murder taking place within a few feet of him, snatched up his empty glass and threw it with unerring accuracy at the ruffian's weapon.

The crash of glass and the report of the revolver were almost simultaneous.

But the rascal's aim was jarred and the ball missed the deputy's brain by the fraction of an inch.

CHAPTER IX.

OFF FOR THE BLACK TRIPLETS.

The glass thrown by Tom had broken on the ruffian's hand and cut an ugly gash.

The shock caused him to drop the revolver, which struck the back of his chair and bounded toward the spot where the boys stood.

As Higgings turned with a snarl of rage to see from whence this fresh attack had come, Tom reached down and picked up the rascal's weapon.

A score of revolvers flashed about the room.

The lives of the two deputies as well as those of the intrepid Tom and the unfortunate Bob, hung in the balance, when the sheriff himself, accompanied by six armed assistants, dashed into the room prepared for business.

At the same moment the red-headed villain swung around

on his heel and dashed through an open doorway near at hand, followed by a bullet from the gun of the wounded deputy.

Whether the ball reached him or not it failed to stop his retreat, and a subsequent search showed that he had got clear off.

Tom and Bob left the place under the wing of the sheriff's party.

Both the deputy whose life he had saved, and his companion, were loud in their praises of Tom's nerve and courage.

"You clearly saved my life," said Deputy Jordan. "But it was touch and go with me even at that. You can see where the rascal's ball cut a furrow along my cheek. Why, boy, you did what scarcely another man in Clear Creek would have dared to do. That's one of the most desperate scoundrels under the sun. His name is Bill Higgings, and he's known far and wide as a dead shot—a man who has killed a lot of men, for he's quicker than greased lightning with his gun. Had your aim not been true, causing him to drop his gun, we would both have been subjects for the coroner, while my companion and your own would probably have suffered the same fate. Young man, I am proud to know you. You can count me as your friend for life. My name is Jack Jordan. Shake."

Tom and the deputy shook hands.

The news of Tom's remarkable act in "The Eldorado" against such a notorious villain as Bill Higgings was certain to be known all over town by morning, and he was sure to find himself an object of universal attention and interest, and rated as the nerviest lad who had ever stepped foot in Clear Creek.

"We're right in it, Tom," said Bob, when the boys had retired to their room. "Or rather you are, for I'm only a side issue."

"Well, it is a great satisfaction to me to know that I saved a man's life to-night," replied his companion. "It is true that I didn't know I was up against the worst desperado in the State, but even had I known it I shouldn't have acted differently. When I saw him yank his gun out I felt it in my bones that he was going to kill the officer, and on the spur of the moment I did the best thing I knew how to try and prevent the tragedy."

"It was a good thing that you hit the mark fair and square. If you hadn't—you know what the deputies said."

"I'll bet I've marked him for life."

"I'm glad we're going away in a day or two. The rascal, or some of his friends, might lay for us and try to get square."

"We must carry our guns after this for protection. I think I'll use his revolver. It's heavier and more formidable than the one I bought for myself."

Tom drew out Bill Higgings's weapon and looked at it.

"It's a corker," said Bob. "I wonder how many men he's killed with it?"

"More than one, I'll wager."

The boys talked for some time over their strenuous experience in "The Eldorado."

They realized that they ought not to have gone into the resort in the first place, but they had supposed that all the places were about alike in character.

Next morning when the boys appeared in the dining-room there was a craning of necks to get a good look at them, Collingwood especially.

The girl waited on Tom with considerable deference, and seemed to be overcome with admiration for his stalwart form and good-looking face.

There were three waitresses, and they evidently envied this one the privilege she enjoyed.

After the meal the boys started out to purchase their horses.

All along the street they attracted attention as a most extraordinary pair of tenderfoots.

The man who had horses for sale, and to whom they had a note of introduction from the hotel man, complimented Tom on his pluck and then brought out two of his most serviceable animals for inspection.

They bought the Mexican brand of saddles, and a pair of saddle bags apiece. Also long ropes to tether their animals when they camped for grub or to pass the night.

They purchased a quantity of tinned goods and other supplies, and having secured about all they thought they needed, they returned to the hotel for dinner.

Tom had a talk with the hotel man about the lay of the

country in the direction of the Black Triplets, and was abundantly supplied with information.

They decided to set out soon after dinner and put up over night at the ranch of one William Spencer, to whose hospitality they were warmly recommended by Sheriff Bartling.

Deputy Sheriff Jack Jordan, who came around to see them, gave them lots of good advice, and helped them pack their things on their horses in proper shape.

He advised them to get a long, thin and tough rope for mountain climbing, as he said it was bound to come in handy.

Rifles, being an unnecessary incumbrance, were not considered in their make-up.

Jordan said that their revolvers ought to afford them sufficient protection.

They were not likely to meet with any special peril from the inhabitants of the district, unless they ran foul of Bill Higgings and some of his crowd.

"I hardly think that you'll run across that gang in the direction you're going, as the rascals have been operating chiefly between here and Denver. However, you should keep your weather eye lifting all the time, for there's no telling just where the scamps may turn up. After what you did to Higgings last night it would not be well for either of you to meet him. He can draw a gun quicker than any man in the State, and he is counted a dead shot. There is a reward of \$5,000 standing for his capture, alive or dead, and \$1,000 apiece for regular members of his gang."

The boys thought that they would prefer not to run across the desperado, even with the chance of winning one of the rewards.

A crowd gathered to see them off and then, all being in readiness, they took their leave of Clear Creek and headed for the distant mountain range.

CHAPTER X.

TOM AND BOB MAKE A NEW FRIEND.

They were soon out of sight of town and riding among the various mines of the district.

Occasionally they were recognized and warmly greeted by miners who had been in Clear Creek the night before and heard of Collingwood's performance at "The Eldorado."

Every one asked them whither they were bound, and Tom gave out the impression that they were on a prospecting tour.

In the course of two hours they had passed beyond the mining district of Clear Creek and were alone on the trail leading in the direction of the Black Triplets.

"This is simply great," remarked Bob, as they rode along side by side. "I feel like a bird."

"After we have roughed it a while things will look different," replied Tom. "At present we are enjoying a new and novel experience, and even the bare plain and commonplace foothills interest us. When we return to Clear Creek I hope we will have evidences of unlimited wealth in our saddle bags."

"I shall be greatly disappointed if we do not," replied Bob.

"Hello!" exclaimed Tom. "Here comes a solitary horseman from the direction of the mines."

"As long as it isn't red-headed Bill Higgings I don't care," answered Bob.

"He's evidently aiming to keep us company."

"I've no objection to his aiming at anything except a gun at us," grinned Bob. "I've no ambition to be made a target of."

The stranger came on after them at a rapid pace, and ere long they made out that he was a boy like themselves.

"I wonder who he is and where he's going?" asked Bob.

"If you say so, we'll get our guns out, hold him up and make him give an account of himself," chuckled Tom.

"He might get his gun out first and then the laugh would be on us."

As they were merely jogging along at a slow pace the young horseman presently overtook them.

"Well, pardners, you're from Clear Creek, I guess?" he said, as he reined in beside Tom.

He was a well-built, curly-headed lad, with frank, handsome features, well tanned by constant exposure to the sun and open air.

Tom and Bob took an instant fancy to him.

"That's right," replied Tom. "We left there something over two hours ago."

"Are you the boys who were in 'The Eldorado' last night?" he asked with some eagerness in his tones.

"We are the chaps," replied Tom.

"I'm glad to meet you, pard. I heard about you up in the Alpha Mine, where I just came from. Which of you is Tom Collingwood?" his eyes resting on Tom as if he suspected he was the person.

"That's my name," said Tom.

"Shake, pard. I'm proud to make your acquaintance. My name is Sam Munson."

"Glad to know you, Munson," said Tom. "This is my chum, Bob Preston."

The boys nodded at each other.

"When I heard that you fellows had been seen riding out this way I hurried on to meet you, for I wanted to know the fellow who had the nerve to stand out against Red Bill Higgings. You're a wonder, Collingwood."

"Oh, I don't know," replied Tom. "I've had so many bouquets thrown at me since last evening that it's a wonder I haven't a swelled head by this time."

"How did you come to go into 'The Eldorado'? Didn't you know that it was the toughest saloon in town?"

"No. They all looked alike to Bob and me."

"That's where Bill Higgings used to hang out before the town got too hot for him. It shows you what a desperate chap he is when he had the nerve to venture back there in the boldest kind of way with a big price on his head."

"I guess he's about as hard as they come."

"You can bet he is. It's a marvel to me that you escaped alive."

"It was the sheriff's appearance that saved our bacon."

"You boys are from the East, of course?"

"We are. From good old New York State."

"Come here to rough it?"

"That's what we have."

"You look as if you might be going prospecting."

"We're on a gold digging jaunt."

"You'll have to find your gold first," smiled Munson.

"We're looking for it now."

"Been studying mineralogy, I suppose, and have come out here to practise what you learned from your books."

"No, I can't say we've done any of that kind of studying. We've been working in a cutlery works for a matter of three years."

"Don't you know anything about the properties of mineral substances?" asked Munson in no little surprise.

"Not a thing."

"Then how do you expect to distinguish the presence of gold-bearing rock?"

"By seeing the specks of gold in it," replied Tom, rather innocently.

Munson laughed heartily at his answer.

"I'm afraid you'll only waste your time if you try to prospect on that line," he said. "A would-be prospector ought to acquire all the knowledge he can, both theoretical and practical, pertaining to the business before he starts out on an actual trip. He should learn in what rocks and under what conditions he may reasonably hope to discover certain minerals, so that he may not look for gold and silver veins in the unaltered rocks of the flat prairie. One of the best preliminary educations is actual work in the mines and mills, where one may get an idea of the ores, how they occur in nature and their relative value."

"You talk as if you knew considerable about the matter," said Tom, regarding their new acquaintance with interest.

"I ought to. I've studied the subject on the lines I've mentioned, and I've done some practical prospecting to test my knowledge. But I came out here chiefly to rough it for my health."

"Where do you hang out?"

"At my uncle's ranch, about fifteen miles from here. I can promise you that you'll receive a hearty welcome."

"We expected to stay over night at William Spencer's ranch," said Tom.

"That's my uncle."

"I'm glad to hear it. I've a note to him from Sheriff Bartling."

"Well, the best introduction you could have is the record you put against Red Bill Higgings. The rascal has a grudge against my uncle, and has threatened to do him up some time. He tried it once some months back, but was beaten off. The man who puts Red Bill under the sod will get \$1,000 from uncle."

Tom and Bob liked Sam Munson more and more as the three cantered along over the trail, and Sam seemed to be equally attracted to them.

"Where are you fellows bound, anyway?" asked Munson.

"We're making for the range in the neighborhood of the Black Triplets."

"The dickens you are. That's a mighty wild district. I know several prospectors who have been down that way, but they didn't find any indications of gold, and they were men of great experience. One of them stopped over night with uncle on his way back to Clear Creek some weeks ago. He was an old chap named Thomas Triggs."

"We knew him," said Tom.

"Did you? Where did you meet him? In Denver?"

"No. In Forksville, New York, the town where we were living."

"You don't say. I never thought he'd go East. He's been thirty-five years, according to his own account, in the West, Southwest and Northwest. Those sort of men scarcely care to return to civilized haunts."

"He went East because he had the rheumatism bad, and he thought he'd get better of it there. But he didn't. It went to his heart and he died."

"So he's dead, eh?"

"Yes. Look here, Munson, I rather like you. I think you're a pretty decent kind of fellow. If I tell you why Bob and I have come out here will you keep it to yourself?"

"I will, upon my word."

"And would you like to come with us to the Black Triplets?"

"Yes, I'm willing to go with you, though I think you're bound on a wild-goose chase."

"You mean in our search for gold?"

"Yes."

"Suppose I told you we've come all the way from New York State with the expectation of finding lots of gold in the Black Triplets?"

"Then I'd say I felt sorry for you, as you're bound to be disappointed. Did you?"

"We did. And we have a definite object in view. Did you ever hear of a place called Death Valley in yonder range?"

"I've heard my uncle speak of such a place, but though it's been hunted for by many prospectors, it's never been found. So I guess its existence is a matter of considerable doubt."

"Why did prospectors look for it?"

"Because there is a story that it was rich with gold."

"Well, there is such a place, and it is rich with gold. It's alive with it."

"How do you know that?" asked Munson in surprise.

"Because Mr. Triggs told me all about it. He's been there, and I saw the samples of ore he brought away with him. They assayed \$600 and \$700 a ton."

"When did he tell you that?"

"Just before he died."

"When he stopped with us that night he never said a word about Death Valley. Are you sure he was in his right mind?"

"I have plenty of evidence to show that he was. He heard the story of Death Valley from an old Indian twenty years ago. Since then he made seven attempts to locate the place. He failed six times, but the seventh he was successful. That was just before you saw him at the ranch. He staked the valley out and recorded his claims at Denver. That looks like business, doesn't it?"

"It does for a fact," admitted Munson.

"Just before he died he willed the property to me and gave me full directions how to find the path leading to the valley, which must be a peculiar one since it has defied discovery so long."

"Say, pard, this yarn of yours is mighty interesting. I'll be glad to go with you to the Black Triplets if only on the chance of seeing this mysterious valley. So you saw rich gold-bearing rock that old man Triggs said came from Death Valley?"

"Bob and I saw it all right, and we've got some of the specimens in our trunk which we left at the hotel in Clear Creek."

"You shall see them if we don't find this valley and gather more of the same kind there. I was thinking you'd be a good one to have with us because you understand rocks and such things and we do not. We have come prepared to wash out the surface gold which Mr. Triggs said lies about all over the valley. If things turn out as we expect I intend to form a company and go right into the mining business."

"Well, if old Triggs told the truth about Death Valley, and you've succeeded to his rights, you're liable to become a rich boy. One thing will then be absolutely certain—there'll be a rush to Death Valley to capture claims, and we'll have a new mining camp down in the range. That will probably bring the railroad down through this part of the country, and

it will grow. People will settle along the line of the road, and my uncle's ranch will cease to be in the wilderness."

The sun was now setting behind the mountains in the west. Munson looked around the landscape.

"Another hour's ride will bring us to the ranch," he said, and Tom and Bob were mighty glad to hear it, for it gave them visions of a good warm meal with a bed to follow—luxuries that they didn't expect to participate in again for some time.

CHAPTER XI.

LOVE'S YOUNG DREAM.

Before the hour had elapsed they were riding up a wide path to the porch of a two-story, rambling sort of building, that looked to be at least twenty-five or thirty years old.

It was flanked by a number of outhouses, the whole collection looking decidedly lonesome where you couldn't see another house for miles no matter in what direction you gazed.

This was the ranch of William Spencer, to whom Tom bore a letter of introduction from Sheriff Bartling, of Clear Creek.

Their approach was noted by Mr. Spencer himself, who was sitting on the porch.

He easily made out that his nephew Sam was one of the party, and he presumed the other two, whom he saw were boys also, were friends of Sam.

They dismounted near the porch steps and an employee of the ranch came forward and led the three animals away.

"Uncle Will," said Sam, "let me make you acquainted with Tom Collingwood (Tom bowed) and Bob Preston."

Bob also bowed.

"Glad to know you, young men," said the ranchman.

"Take off your knapsacks and make yourselves at home. My nephew will show you to a room presently. Dinner will be ready shortly."

Tom presented the sheriff's letter to Mr. Spencer, who opened and read it.

Sheriff Bartling gave the bearer an uncommon reputation for nerve and pluck.

He had written a brief account of Tom's run-in with the notorious Bill Higgings at "The Eldorado" the night before, through which the boy had saved Jack Jordan's life.

"Young man," said the ranchman, after he had read the letter, "allow me to shake your hand again. So you actually took your life in your hands to save a stranger from being shot dead by Red Bill Higgings?" He regarded his young visitor with a look of admiration. "You dared to face that scoundrel with only a tumbler for a weapon. And you came out first best at that. There must be a special providence watching over you, young man. Had you deliberately wished to commit suicide you could scarcely have taken a surer means of turning up your toes than by doing what you did. The fact that you did not become a subject for the coroner is that you had the benefit of the one chance in a thousand. I admire your pluck and self-possession in a trying ordeal, and feel proud to have you as my guest."

Mr. Spencer told Sam to take the boys to a certain room on the second floor, and grabbing up their knapsacks he led the way up a wide entrance.

Their conductor showed them into a low-ceiled, spacious chamber, where they proceeded to get rid of the dust and dirt of their afternoon's ride, while Sam went to his own room to freshen himself up likewise.

When he returned Tom and Bob were ready to accompany him downstairs.

The boys were now introduced to Mrs. Spencer and her daughter Jessie, a very pretty, dark-eyed young girl of sixteen years.

They greeted their visitors with great cordiality, but from the way they particularly regarded Tom it was easy to see that the ranchman had communicated to them the contents of the sheriff's letter.

Dinner was presently announced and the visitors were shown into the dining-room.

The boys thought the meal an uncommonly good one, and several degrees better than what the Clear Creek hotel had furnished.

Tom was quite taken with Miss Jessie, who was a bright and vivacious girl, and the young lady seemed to be equally attracted to the good-looking boy.

After the meal all adjourned to the porch, which was now bathed in the light of the rising moon.

Tom stated in a general way the object of their journey in that direction.

"The range thereabouts has been pretty well prospected," Mr. Spencer said, "without any important results. I am afraid you are only wasting your time."

"Well, sir, we can afford the time. If we don't find gold we'll find experience. A few weeks' roughing it among the mountains will probably do us good. I suppose you have no objections to your nephew accompanying us on this trip. He is willing to do so, and we should like to have him along for company," said Tom.

"No objections at all," replied the ranchman. "Sam has carte blanche to go anywhere he pleases whenever he pleases. We don't hold him in check by any set rules or regulations, for we know he is a boy to be trusted."

So the matter of Sam's going with them was settled.

Mr. Spencer would not hear of the boys taking their departure for several days.

Ordinarily, Tom would have preferred resuming his trip to the Black Triplets, but the bright eyes and engaging ways of Jessie Spencer had their effect upon him, and he was quite content to remain a while at the ranch and ramble about in her company while Bob and Sam amused themselves together.

Tom's reputation for courage and coolness in an emergency was greatly enhanced at the ranch when Bob described how he had saved the night express on the Midland Central Railroad by signaling the engineer from the center of the steel girder bridge, and then leaping down between the girders to save himself from being crushed to death by the oncoming locomotive.

"So you came all the way from the East to hunt for gold in the mountains of Colorado?" said Jessie to Tom, as she was walking with him not far from the house on the second day of his visit.

"Yes," nodded the boy. "And I expect to find it, too, somewhere in the neighborhood of the Black Triplets."

"Father is afraid that you'll be disappointed."

"If we are able to find Death Valley I don't think we'll be disappointed."

"But father doesn't think there is any such place."

"He admits that he heard of it often when he first came to live on this ranch," replied Tom.

"Every prospector who has been down this way has looked for the valley, but none ever found it."

"That's where you're wrong. One prospector did find it."

"We never heard the fact mentioned. Nearly all the prospectors dropped in on us both to and from the range, and if one of them had found the valley I think he certainly would have mentioned it, for he would have considered it as quite a feather in his cap, whether there were indications of gold there or not."

"The man who accidentally discovered the only path that leads to the valley called here on his return to Denver, but kept the secret to himself. He was an old fellow named Thomas Triggs."

"I remember him well," she replied. "It is not so long ago that he was here."

"Well, you'll never see him again. He is dead."

"Is it possible?"

"Yes. Before he died he confided the secret of Death Valley to me, and willed me his claim in the place. He assured me that there was enough gold there to make me wealthy. So Bob Preston and I have come to this State to verify his discovery and take possession of his property if it shows promising results. We've persuaded your cousin Sam to accompany us, and if the valley pans out he shall have a share in the good thing."

"I should dearly love to go along, too," she said, with sparkling eyes, "but of course I can't for I'm only a girl. How I wish I was a boy!"

"I'm glad you're not a boy. I shouldn't like you half so well if you were."

Jessie blushed vividly and looked down at the ground.

"I'm afraid when I start for the range with the boys I'll leave something behind me here on the ranch," went on Tom after a pause. "Can't you guess what it is?" he added in a low tone.

She did not dare ask what he meant, for there was something in his tone and manner that gave her a strong suspicion of the truth, and her heart began to flutter strangely.

Both were conscious of the fact that when they came to part a few days later a void would be left which had not existed before they met each other.

"Before I met you, Jessie," breathed Tom, "I did not know

what it was to care for any girl, though I've met lots of them. Now it is different. My heart has gone right out to you. I don't know whether you care anything for me or not, but I do know that you have become all the world to me. I know that when I leave you all the pleasure I had counted on in this trip to the range will disappear. I will be only able to think of the little girl I left behind on this ranch. Now I want to know if you will miss me even a little bit."

They came to a pause in an open space in the wood and Tom looked earnestly down at the sweet face that was turned away from him.

Although she did not indicate by words that she would miss him in the least, there was something in her manner that encouraged him, and he slipped his arm around her slim waist.

She made no move to draw away from him, and this emboldened him to proceed.

"Aren't you going to answer me, Jessie?" he asked in a tone that fell thrillingly on her ears. "Perhaps I have offended you."

"No, no," she said, half turning toward him in evident confusion.

"Then tell me—do you or do you not care for me?"

Then he lifted her face, hot with blushes, with one hand, and gazed into her averted eyes.

"Is it yes or—no?" he asked earnestly.

For a moment she was silent and then as he pressed her still closer she said in a scarcely audible tone, "Yes," and buried her face on his shoulder.

"You do care for me," he exclaimed joyfully. "With all your heart as I care for you?"

"Yes," she replied.

He bent his head, and gently raising hers, kissed her on the lips.

But at that moment love's young dream was rudely intruded upon by a hoarse, jeering guffaw behind them, whose jarring note speedily awoke them to the realization that not only they no longer were alone, but there was danger in the air.

Jessie released herself with a stifled exclamation.

As they turned around to see who the intruder was they were confronted by the leering, wicked countenance and stalwart form of Red Bill Higgings, whose treacherous eyes glowed upon them with a sarcastic, triumphant expression.

CHAPTER XII.

IN THE MOUNTAIN CAVE.

"A pretty pair of turtle doves, upon my word," he said sardonically. "It's almost a pity to have trapped 'em. So young feller, you and me meet again, eh? Do you see that hand?" he went on menacingly, raising his bandaged right fist. "That's your work: Besides, I was almost caught on your account. Well, them that butts in must pay the piper. grab 'em, boys. This here is Spencer's darter, and we'll make him pay a stiff price to get her back. As for the boy, I'll attend to him when we reach the range."

A pair of villainous looking rascals appeared from among the trees and advanced to do their leader's bidding.

Jessie uttered a terrified scream, and Tom pulled his revolver to defend her.

Higgings, however, had his gun out so quick that it took the boy's breath away.

Shoving the muzzle into Tom's face, he cried:

"Drop your gun, or I'll blow the roof off your head!"

Tom had cocked his weapon, but that was as far as he had got.

He saw he had no show at all, but if the act cost him his life he determined to second Jessie's cry by a pistol shot that he hoped would call attention to the spot.

So he pulled the trigger.

The revolver went off and the bullet went into the ground.

Then he dropped the weapon.

The ruffian did not suspect his object, but supposed he had discharged his revolver from fright.

So he simply lifted his left hand and struck Tom a stunning blow in the head which felled him unconscious to the ground.

"Quick! Gag the girl with a handkerchief and carry her to our horses," he said vehemently.

Then he stooped, lifted Tom and threw him across his shoulder, thus displaying great strength.

In a few moments they were unhitching their animals and preparing to retreat.

"Take the boy, Norris," he said to one of the men. "I'll carry the girl myself."

He sprang on his horse, took the struggling Jessie from the man holding her, and spurred off at full speed in the direction of the range.

Jessie's scream and the pistol shot alarmed Mr. Spencer, who happened to be riding along the edge of the wood a short distance away.

Fearing some trouble threatened his only child he dashed toward the wood just in time to see Red Bill Higgings riding away from it with Jessie in his arms, followed in a moment by his two rascally followers.

The ranchman recognized the abductors with a groan of anguish.

He knew it was useless for him to follow them alone.

So noting the direction they were taking he turned his horse back toward the ranch-house, firing his revolver as he went.

This raised a general alarm and half a dozen of his men came running up.

Bob and Sam were not present, as they had gone fishing some miles away.

Mr. Spencer hurriedly explained the situation to his men, and told them to get their rifles and their horses and follow him.

The ruffians were well mounted on stout mustangs, and they set a hot pace for their pursuers, whom they led by nearly three miles.

After half an hour's chase it seemed to be certain, unless some accident happened to the villains, that they would surely reach the fastnesses of the mountains in time to hide somewhere.

It was dark when Tom came to his senses and found himself lying on the rocky floor of a cave in the mountain side.

Two yards away a fire was burning hidden behind a big boulder.

Bill Higgings, looking fiercer than ever in the fitful glow of the flames, was seated with his back against the rocky wall, smoking a pipe and talking to one of the men, while the other one was employed cooking something over the fire.

"You must have hit the boy a good clout, for he shows no signs of coming to," Tom heard the villain's associate remark.

"That's what I meant to do to keep him quiet till we got out here. He'll come around by the time the moon is up," replied Higgings, with a wicked laugh, "then I'll take him down the stream, blow his brains out and chuck him into the water."

"Better wait till mornin'," said the other. "The shot might attract the attention of the ranch crowd who are lookin' for us."

"They're not around here. I saw them go in the other direction. They're miles away beating up the bushes somewhere around the Black Triplets."

"I wouldn't take no chances unless you're sure. Our skins is more valuable than the death of that kid. If I was you I'd tie him hand and foot and leave him in the inner cave where the girl is now to starve. You'd get a heap more satisfaction out of that, at least I would if I was doin' the thing. What's a ball in the head? He'd never know what struck him. Starvin' is different. He'll suffer for days and die little by little. That's the way to get the good out of revenge."

"I don't know but you're right, Norris. I'll think it over."

At that moment the other man announced that the meal was ready.

"Then dish it out, Walker. Leave enough in the pot for the gal. We've got to look out for her, as she's worth several thousand to us," said Higgings.

They lost very little time disposing of it, then one of the tin pannikins was filled with what remained in the pot, and Higgings taking it in his hand walked away into the back of the cave, disappearing around a ledge of rock.

Tom could hear him talking to some one in there, and he knew that someone was Jessie Spencer.

After a time he returned and stopped in front of Tom, who as soon as he saw him coming pretended to be still unconscious.

After one sharp glance at Collingwood he returned to the vicinity of the dying fire where he began to talk with Norris.

"Look here, pard, I've just thought of a rare scheme," said Higgings, knocking the ashes from his pipe and refilling it. "Spencer and his men will not go home till they've exhausted every possible chance of findin' the gal. Now don't

you see, my laddybucks, that leaves the ranch with hardly a defender. Probably one man and the two young chaps are all that's there now. My idea is for us three to ride over there, take the people by surprise, knock 'em on the head to keep 'em quiet, plunder the place and then set fire to it. We'll gain a lot of valuables, and I'll have a full revenge on Bill Spencer for past favors. The light of the burnin' ranch is likely to bring the crowd that's after us back to the property. We'll swing around and return here along the foothills. Then after I dispose of the boy we'll take the gal with us and go south to some safe place from which I kin make terms for the gal's return. How does this strike you?"

"First rate," exclaimed Norris. "I vote we carry it out."

Walker also signified his willingness to fall into the plan.

"Then that's settled. The sooner we start the better, for it won't be no darker than it is now. Get a piece of rope, Norris, and tie the boy so he can't get away when he comes to his senses. I'll fix the gal so she'll be safe enough here. Then we'll move on for the ranch."

Bill Higgings and his men got on their feet, and Norris, getting the rope, came over to Tom.

He shooed the boy roughly, but Tom acted like a dead one, and satisfied that their prisoner was still out of his senses, he proceeded to bind his legs together.

Then Norris turned Collingwood over on his face and tied his arms just above his wrists.

As he worked in the dark, and Tom artfully held his wrists in such a way that reversing them would cause a certain amount of slack in the rope, the job was, on the whole, rather a bungling one.

While Norris was engaged with Tom, Higgings went in to the inner part of the cave and secured Jessie.

Satisfied that they would find their prisoners on their return just as they were leaving them, the rascals left the cave, mounted their horses and rode off toward the ranch, six miles away.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE END OF RED BILL HIGGINGS.

Tom didn't waste a moment after the scoundrels had departed in making a strong effort to free himself.

As he felt that his life ultimately depended on his success, he worked away with feverish eagerness.

His ruse at the time Norris was tying him, as well as the smallness of his hands, worked in his favor, and inside of a quarter of an hour he had worked one hand out of limbo, and it was easy to release the other.

The jack-knife he always carried was in his pocket, the rascals not having searched him, and five minutes sufficed to free him wholly of his bonds.

Then he stood up with a sigh of satisfaction.

"Now to release Jessie; but without horses I don't see how we can return to the ranch in time to outwit Higgings and his men. Let us hope Bob, Sam and whoever else may be there, will be able to hold them off. I fear, however, that the rascals may succeed in surprising them, and then the worst is likely to happen."

He had his matchesafe in his clothes and he struck a lucifer as soon as he had felt his way around the corner of the ledge.

As the light flared up he saw the huddled-up form of Jessie close by, gagged and tightly bound.

Her eyes lit up with surprise and joy when she recognized Tom coming to her.

But she could not utter a word on account of the handkerchief which Higgings had bound tightly across her mouth.

Tom, however, quickly released her from the handkerchief, and she could only exclaim, "Oh, Tom!" when she fainted.

He cut her bonds, and taking her in his arms, carried her out of the cave.

Perceiving a running mountain stream near by, Tom bore her to its banks, and dashed the clear, cold water in her face until he succeeded in restoring her to consciousness.

Then he asked her what had happened after he was struck down in the wood by the red-headed scoundrel.

She told him how they had been carried across the plain to the range, followed by half a dozen horsemen from the ranch, one of whom she believed to be her father.

Then Jessie wanted to know how Tom had managed to escape.

"I will tell you as we go along, Jessie. We must not stay here, though the villains are a mile or two away by this time

on their way, I'm sorry to say, to attack, rob and burn the ranch, which they believe to be unprotected at the present time."

Jessie was greatly distressed to learn that news on her mother's account, knowing that she would be exposed to probable indignities in case the ruffians were successful in achieving their object.

Tom reassured her as well as he could.

"The main issue with us now is to make sure of our escape. The ranch is six miles away and we can do nothing to save it. If we could meet your father and his men, matters could be arranged differently."

The words were hardly out of his mouth before they almost ran into the arms of two of Mr. Spencer's cowboys.

They did not recognize the men in the gloom, and their first impression was that they had unexpectedly run foul of their enemies.

Jessie uttered a scream of fear and fell back with Tom, but the identity of the men was at once established when one of them cried, in a tone of satisfaction:

"Hello! If this isn't Jessie and Collingwood I'm a liar."

"Will Anson, is that you?" gasped the girl, recognizing the man's voice.

"It's me all right, miss," replied the cowboy. "How did you escape from those desperadoes?"

"Where is my father?" asked Jessie, without answering his question.

"He's somewhere around in the neighborhood. We're out lookin' for you in small parties. I'll have them all here in no time."

He drew his revolver and fired three shots in the air.

Three answering shots were fired a short distance away, and other reports followed further away.

Almost directly two more cowboys came up, and the party started to walk in the direction indicated by Anson.

In five minutes they were joined by the ranchman and a fifth cowboy.

The seventh member of the party was watching the horses some distance away.

The meeting between father and daughter was a joyful one.

Explanations ensued and Mr. Spencer learned that his daughter's safety was due to Tom Collingwood.

"You've conferred a lasting obligation on me, Collingwood," said the grateful father. "Be sure I shall not forget what I owe you."

"All right, Mr. Spencer. I did the best I could for her, and am glad I was able to rescue her. But we have no time to stand here and talk. Your ranch is in danger from those rascals. They've ridden over to attack and destroy it while you and your men are here searching for us. You'd better lose no time in returning. I'll tell you how I learned this afterward."

Reaching the horses, Mr. Spencer took his daughter in front of him on his own horse, while Anson gave Tom a lift on his animal, and in a few minutes the entire party was riding at full speed for the ranch.

When within a mile of the place they heard two rifle shots and saw the flashes of the same from the windows of the house.

This urged them on to an extra spurt of speed, and they soon observed flashes from behind one of the outhouses, which showed that the rascals were firing at the defenders of the building, who it appeared had not been taken by surprise, much to the ranchman's satisfaction.

The moon coming out at that moment, the villains caught sight of the approaching horsemen, and not being strong enough to contend against reinforcements, they sprang on their horses and tried to escape to the hills.

Tom sprang off Anson's horse so as not to incommode him, and the six cowboys speeded after the retreating rascals.

Possessing a great advantage in their rifles, the cowboys brought down the villains one by one by firing at their mustangs and unhorsing them.

When they surrounded Red Bill Higgings he put up a desperate fight, for he knew his life was forfeited anyhow.

He wounded three of the cowboys, one of them badly, before he was mortally shot, himself hit by a rifle ball.

The cowboys surrounded him, and though they saw he was sure to die, they put a lariat around his neck and hanged him in short order to a convenient tree, where they left him swinging in the night air.

The other two rascals they secured and carried to the ranch, whence they were next day removed to Clear Creek and turned over to Sheriff Bartling.

In the meantime Tom Collingwood became the hero of the ranch, and no one there could do too much for him during the next three days before he, Bob and Sam Munson set out for the Black Triplets.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE GIANT SKULL.

During the first two or three hours of the journey Tom looked down in the mouth.

It was something of a trial for him to tear himself away from the fascinating influence exercised over him by Jessie Spencer.

The girl herself was similarly affected, for she had learned to love the manly-looking boy with all the strength of a first attachment.

Bob and Sam understood Tom's feelings, for they had not been blind to his evident preference for Jessie's society during his stay at the ranch.

They stopped for dinner among the foothills, within sight of the three dark-colored mountain peaks, and they reached the long, narrow valley which circled around the base of two of the Triplets shortly after sundown.

Here they established their camp for the night, picketing their horses and starting a fire.

Sam Munson volunteered to act as cook and his services were accepted.

He soon prepared a pot of coffee and fried a mess of bacon and eggs, which with the fresh bread and butter they had brought with them from the ranch, made a first-rate *al fresco* meal.

They were up with the sun and Sam prepared the breakfast in good shape, after which Tom got out his compass and paper of directions.

"I must find a certain black stone," he said. "That's where I start from. So keep your eyes skinned for such a thing."

They proceeded slowly up the valley, watching out for the stone in question.

At length Sam caught sight of a tall, dark-colored stone jutting out of the ground near the base of Triplet No. 1, as they called it.

"There's your black stone," said Sam. "If it isn't exactly black it's next door to it at any rate."

"I guess that must be it," said Tom, putting the compass down on the southwest side of it. "At any rate if it isn't the right one I'll soon know."

"Everything is O. K. so far," he said, in a tone of satisfaction. "Now we must picket our horses. All we'll take with us is a pick, shovel, a pan for washing the gold, our knapsacks and cooking utensils. I'll strap the pick on my back. You'd better carry the shovel, Bob. The pans and other things I'll assign to you, Sam. After we discover the path to Death Valley, and get the hang of the way to it, we can come back here and carry back with us the rest of our supplies and other things."

Tom called for the long, thin rope, which he threw over his arm.

As an extra precaution Sam strapped his rifle on his back, and thus prepared, they started their ascent, following an exact course by compass.

After a while they struck a dense thicket, through which Tom led the way.

After half an hour's climbing the way grew so rugged that Tom thought it advisable to use the rope tied around their waists equal distances apart, so as to help one another over difficult places.

They soon found it of great assistance.

"If this is the only way to the golden valley," said Bob, "we're going to have a whole lot of trouble getting to and fro, and carrying such a heavy weight as gold."

"A little engineering will make the road much easier."

"You don't call this a path, do you?" asked Bob, with a grimace.

"No. There is no path till we strike the Giant Skull, then the 'Path to Good Luck' as the old man called it, leads straight down to Death Valley. If there was a path all the way up here the valley would no doubt have been easily found long ago."

The higher they went the harder the way became and the more wild and sterile became the face of the mountains.

It was apparent to Sam that Mr. Triggs did not come up here because he expected to find gold on the mountain, but

because he was searching for an entrance to Death Valley, where he believed gold was to be found if anywhere in the Triplets.

At length the boys came to a deep fissure in the mountain side, along one side of which ran a narrow footpath.

With Bob in the lead now they ascended this, and gradually approached the highest point of Triplet No. 1.

Suddenly Bob was arrested by a tug at the rope.

"See!" cried Tom Collingwood, pointing across the fissure. "The Giant Skull!"

"My gracious!" exclaimed Bob. "So it is."

Sam, lower down, gave a startled gasp.

The three boys gazed awesomely at the curious rocky formation staring them in the face.

"The Giant Skull," repeated Tom, his blood leaping with excitement. "The old man's story is clearly true. 'The Path to Good Luck' lies before us, and at its foot is Death Valley—the New Eldorado—the Valley of Gold."

CHAPTER XV.

THE VALLEY OF GOLD.

They were now exceedingly anxious to press on to the valley that apparently lay snugly tucked in between the three dark-colored peaks.

A few yards further on, after rounding the ledge, they came on a well-defined path leading downward.

"Hurrah!" shouted Bob. "Here's the 'Path to Good Luck.'"

They followed it without difficulty, and in half an hour stood in the long-sought-for Death Valley.

Almost the first thing Sam noticed on the trunk of a tree which stood on the bank of the narrow and swiftly-flowing mountain stream which passed along one side of the valley was the following notice:

"DEATH VALLEY LODGE.

"The Death Valley Lode, discovered by Thomas Triggs, May 27, 189—. Claim 750 feet northerly and 750 feet southerly from discovery.

"THOMAS TRIGGS."

Mr. Triggs had staked the claim out in due form by monuments of stone.

There were seven of these altogether, one being near the centre of the claim, close to the discovery shaft which the old prospector had with great labor succeeded in sinking to the requisite depth and width as required by law.

Sam saw that Mr. Triggs had left nothing undone to establish his legal right to the claim, and he so notified Tom.

Tom and Bob found Sam's services invaluable.

Although the small valley, which had clearly once been the bed of a considerable-sized mountain torrent, was alive with surface gold in fine particles, left there during ages by the flow of the original stream from up the range, the two boys could scarcely detect any of the wealth that lay around them.

"You see," said Sam, "this narrow depression, which of course is really not a valley at all, is so hemmed in by the Black Triplets that the golden particles brought down the mountains and swept into this place have lodged here. It is really a remarkable circumstance to find a species of placer deposit in connection with a lode claim. After dinner I will examine the lode as uncovered by Mr. Triggs, and I have no doubt but I will find that it is fully as rich as his samples indicated. While we are here we will investigate this claim more thoroughly. If I find that the veins or the lode, or both, appear to extend under Triplet No. 3, as I should fancy they do, Bob and I can stake out claims for ourselves and reap the benefit that would accrue to others who came here later and prospected beyond your property rights. You are entitled to all veins apexing within the boundaries of your claim, and may work such veins on their dip to their full length for the distance between the parallel vertical planes of the end lines. Under no condition can you follow the vein outside of those points. If we find that the vein in its dip turns and crosses the end plane, Bob and I will stake out the ground that you have no right to and will participate in Mr. Trigg's discovery on our own account the same as any stranger would have the right to do."

"All right," said Tom, "that will suit me. I should be glad to have both of you own separate claims, as it will mean more profit to the three of us combined."

A number of pans full of surface dirt was washed out, first by Sam to show Tom and Bob how to do it properly.

The two Forksville boys soon saw that the manipulation of the pan, while quite simple, required considerable practice before one could become expert.

Sam filled the pan about half full of water from the stream, and then threw into it a shovelful of dirt, after first picking out the larger pebbles.

He worked the whole mass thoroughly with his fingers till all the clay was reduced to a fine sand and mud.

Then he carefully poured off the muddy water and refilled the pan with clear water.

"That's simple enough," remarked Bob. "Any fool could do that."

"Now watch me," said Sam.

He took the pan in both hands, one on either side, and inclining it slightly away from him, gave it a peculiar circular motion.

At each revolution of the pan a portion of the water slopped over the depressed edge of the pan, carrying with it some of the sand and lighter minerals, the gold, owing to its greater specific gravity, remaining at the bottom.

He continued to do this until only a small quantity of sand was left, in which they all saw the specks of gold shining.

Sam then poured nearly all the water off, and moving the pan to and fro, the gold gradually collected by itself, when a final tilt and jerk of the pan disposed of the sand, leaving the gold in an orange-yellow streak.

Tom and Bob then tried the process and succeeded very well after several trials.

They camped for the night on the claim, and next morning made their way back to the valley outside and brought back with them the rest of their supplies and traps, including a small tent provided by Sam.

They remained two weeks in the little valley washing gold, and by that time had collected a considerable quantity of the precious metal.

A number of good-sized nuggets were found, too.

They then returned to the ranch for fresh supplies, and astonished Mr. Spencer with the news of their discovery of Mr. Triggs' valuable claim, now Tom's property.

When they went back to Death Valley the ranchman accompanied them.

Tom decided that the matter should be kept a profound secret until they had washed up a sufficient quantity of gold to give him a good working capital to mine the claim in the latest manner.

Sam and Bob staked off a claim apiece, one on Triplet No. 2 and one on Triplet No. 3.

Three months later the other claims were recorded with the recorder of the county, and then the news of the discovery of gold in the heart of the Black Triplets was circulated far and wide.

Mr. Spencer helped Tom form the "Death Valley Gold Mining Company," the company taking in the four claims on a basis of sixty per cent. stock for Collingwood, and forty per cent. divided between Bob, Sam and the ranchman.

A portion of the stock was sold at a good figure for development purposes, and before long a modern mining plant was in full operation on the Triggs claim.

Within a year sacks of gold ore were being sent to Clear Creek for shipment.

The value of the output soon gave the mine a great reputation, and no one was surprised at the high dividends declared when the company was in full blast.

Very little of the "Death Valley Mining Co." stock could be bought, though it was occasionally quoted on the exchanges at \$40 a share, which was double the price asked for shares of some of the crack Goldfield and Tonopah producers.

To-day Tom Collingwood is a rich young man, while Bob Preston and Sam Munson are on the road to large fortunes.

Mr. Spencer is also gathering in fat dividends on his share of the stock, all of which will eventually return Tom's way through Jessie Spencer, who is now the happy and petted wife of the Boy Miner of Death Valley.

Next week's issue will contain "MART MORTON'S MONEY; OR, A CORNER IN WALL STREET."

SEND POSTAL FOR OUR FREE CATALOGUE

CURRENT NEWS

It looks very easy to break an egg, but it is remarkable how great a pressure may be exerted upon the egg shell before it will break, if the pressure is exerted on the end. It was found by experiment that the pressure required to break eight hens' eggs was between 400 and 675 pounds to the square inch.

The freighter *Cicoa* has loaded pig iron at the Ashland docks for Buffalo, using powerful magnets to lift iron on board and doing away with long-shoremen labor. The *Cicoa* is equipped with three magnets, each capable of lifting 1,500 pounds. The motive power is a dynamo of 250 volts capacity. Only four men were engaged in loading—one man at each dynamo and one at the motor. The *Cicoa* is the only vessel on the lakes so equipped.

Explosive bullets are being used in the machine guns carried by Austrian and German aircraft on the eastern front, according to the *Russkoye Slovo*. German prisoners in the hands of the Russians say the order to fire explosive bullets from aeroplanes has been given to all German aviators. If this be true, it gives the Teutons a distinct advantage over their adversaries, for one hit scored on the enemy's petrol tank would almost always cause a disastrous explosion.

A bill authorizing the New York World to raise, by popular subscription, \$30,000 to install apparatus for the floodlighting of the Statue of Liberty in New York harbor, has been introduced before Congress. At the present time the statue is practically invisible at night, and its lighted torch attracts but little attention. For its efficient floodlighting it is estimated that light from concealed projectors to the intensity of from 6 to 12 foot candles will be required.

An electrically-operated cleaner for blackboard erasers has lately been introduced by an American manufacturer. It consists essentially of a vacuum fan operated by a 1-25th horsepower electric motor. Not only is the chalk dust removed by the strong suction of the fan, but the surface of the eraser is cleaned by a rotating bristle brush. The chalk is drawn into a box, from which the air escapes through a fine muslin filter. It is claimed that no chalk escapes into the room.

The record for trans-Pacific travel from San Francisco to Peking by the southern route was lowered twenty-four hours when Corpl. John Alexander and fourteen privates of the U. S. Marine Corps arrived at Peking, China, for duty with the American Legation Guard of Marines, after having been thirty-four

days en route from San Francisco. The best previous record was thirty-five days and nine hours. The party of United States Marines left San Francisco via an Army transport, and at Guam, Marianna Islands, transshipped to the U. S. S. Brooklyn, which brought them directly to Shanghai. They went from Shanghai to Peking by rail.

Baked beans—especially the canned kind—may soon be as scarce as the proverbial hen's teeth, according to an announcement made at Pittsburgh by one of the largest canning companies in the world, which has notified its salesmen to take no future orders. For this the reason is given that the Government is buying all the beans it can find, and therefore the raw product will probably not be available for public use. With the increased demand, the bean, heretofore considered plain, substantial fare, now enters the luxury class. Canned pork and beans are among the principal foodstuffs used in the army and navy.

Miss Dorothea Roberts, daughter of Dr. and Mrs. M. B. Roberts of Waverly, Kan., met with a very unusual and peculiar accident which almost cost her life. With her father she was riding in their car—the girl in the rear seat, the father in the front seat, driving. In passing over a culvert at good speed the girl was thrown against the top of the automobile and a strong chain which she wore about her neck caught over one of the bows in the top. There she hung until the father noticed that she failed to answer his remarks. When he looked around he found her unconscious, hanging to the top of the automobile. He stopped immediately and did what he could, but she was unconscious for several hours. Her mouth was full of blood caused from the choking of the chain. She will probably recover.

An army correspondent suggests that a law should be passed making it a criminal offense to injure or speak insultingly of the American flag, the penalty to be imprisonment for three months at hard labor. It is proposed that a person hauling down the American flag should not be shot on the spot, after the methods of General Dix, but should be sent to an insane asylum to have the question of his sanity determined. Bills for the protection of the flag, along the lines of the paragraph in the National Defense Act of June 3 that protect the service uniform, have been before successive Congresses, but so far the only laws that protect the flag are local laws, New York and Massachusetts having stringent statutes on the subject. There is now a bill before Congress for the protection of the flag in the District of Columbia and the Territories.

TURNED OUT WEST

OR

THE BOY WHO FOUND A GOLD MINE

By GASTON GARNE

(A SERIAL STORY)

CHAPTER III (Continued).

"Explain quick, then, for I don't want to stand here."

"Now you keep yer shirt on, boy. We don't want to harm you. It's like this. Back thar they've got the wust dancer of the fandango thar is in Arizona, I say. A week ago to-night, I offered to bet fifty to five that any tenderfoot could beat him all out, and I placed a lot of them bets. It was agreed that the first tenderfoot what showed up should be used for the purpose of deciding the affair. We expected some drummer in hyar to-night, and we are hyar to meet him. I expect that's about what you'll be."

"It's what I'm not," replied Leon. "Do you expect me to dance here on the bar?"

"Not much! On the stage with Larry Burns dancing against you. Question is, how bad kin yer dance? Mebbe yer think yer can't dance at all, but I'm bettin' yer kin dance better nor him!"

Here was a proposition.

To ninety-nine boys out of a hundred it would have been a most strenuous one, for what tenderfoot could be expected to dance the Mexican fandango offhand?

But as it happened, Leon Mack was that hundredth boy.

As has been stated, Leon's mother was a Mexican, and in his childhood she had taught him to dance the fandango.

Later, at the military school on the occasion of several theatrical exhibitions, Leon had performed that very dance and had instructed two other boys in the art.

Thus the thing which was now demanded of him happened to be the very thing he could do, and the easiest way out of the scrape seemed to be to do it.

"Well, gentlemen," said Leon, "you have handled me a little rough, but I'm taking it all in good part. If I can decide the bet for you I'm willing to do my best, but you mustn't let the other fellow get the best of me after it is done."

"Hooray! Hooray for the tenderfoot!" the miners roared.

Then they began making bets with each other, and the confusion became indescribable until Buck Sheehan broke in and called a halt.

"Shut up, you fellers!" he shouted. "Run the

tenderfoot onto the stage and let him show what he can do."

Leon's time had come.

Rough hands pulled him off the bar, and Leon was placed upon the shoulders of Jake Penny and Tom Ivory.

Thus supported and with the crowd following, he was carried to the stage.

The news of his coming had evidently gone before him, for the way was cleared.

The orchestra, used to this sort of thing, were banging away and the little stage was deserted when Leon was dropped upon it.

"Burns! Burns!" bellowed the miners and cowboys. "Bring out Larry Burns! Bring on the the gals. Lively, now!"

A young man popped out from behind the stage.

"Jack Fox, you hyar!" gasped Buck, falling back.

"Yes, I'm hyar. What of it?" growled the young man. "What's all this row about? Who's runnin' this house, anyhow?"

"Hold on, Jack," said Buck. "It's only my bet. You knew about that; but you better look out for yerself, old man. The vig is after yer. Better not show yerself in public to-night."

"I'll do as I please in my own house!" snapped the young fellow, who had evidently been drinking. "I dunno nuthin' about the old man."

"They think you do."

"Waal, I don't."

"All right. 'Tain't none of my funeral. Does my bet go. I don't want to make no trouble for you, Jack."

"Sure it goes, if you are orderly about it," was the reply. "Line up on the stage now. Of course the boy can't dance, but a bet's a bet, and I'll give you fellers a show, for I want you to understand that I'm going to run the Alhambra, vig or no vig. I am one man and my father is another—that's all."

There was some cheering from the audience, but it was not hearty by any means.

"So this is Jack Fox's son," thought Leon. "Strange that I should meet him so."

Young Fox vanished then, and in a moment returned, ushering in a dissipated looking young fellow in spangled costume, followed by two Mexican girls in native dress.

"Here's your partner, an' her name is Pepita," said Jack Fox to Leon, introducing one of the ladies. "Lottie, you will dance with Larry," he said to the other.

Jack Fox then advanced to the row of lamps which served as footlights and explained the bet to the audience.

"Fair play now, gentlemen!" he shouted. "You are to be the judges, as I understand it. Am I right, Buck? The standing vote decides?"

"That's right!" bellowed Buck. "I treat all hands if I win and all hands treat me if I lose. Now then, let her go!"

Then the orchestra immediately began to play the Mexican fandango, and Leon knew that his time had come.

But by this time the boy had entered into the spirit of the thing, and the fact that Pepita was just about the prettiest little black-eyed beauty he had ever seen did not make him any the slower to catch on.

Then there was the thought of the surprise which Leon knew that he had in store for his audience.

In a moment he was doing the fandango in perfect time to the stirring music, and Pepita's admiring glances told him that he was doing it well.

The miners stared in amazement.

Larry Burns was indeed a wretched dancer of the fandango, and here was the tenderfoot knowing every step.

As the dance proceeded, and Leon caught Pepita around the waist and began with the whirling figure, wild cheers went up.

"Hooray for the tenderfoot!" the miners shouted, stamping and clapping, while Larry looked daggers at Leon, his angry glances promising trouble later on.

Such was the situation, when all at once there was a bustle in the bar-room and a crowd of men, wearing black masks over their faces, came rushing into the variety hall.

"The vigilantes! The vigilantes!" the miners shouted.

Evidently the feeling against Jack Fox was very strong.

Fox himself, who had been standing at the back, turned pale and whipped out his revolver.

Instantly the dancing ceased and the two Mexican girls fled behind the screen.

Larry Burns stepped over to the edge of the stage and jumped off into the orchestra.

Jake Penny, Tom Ivory and several others of the miners on the stage followed his example.

Buck and those who hung back for the moment now started to do the same.

But young Fox did not budge.

"Will nobody stand by me!" he shouted. "Am I, who am innocent of any crime, to be pulled out of my own burro by the vigilantes?"

Buck jumped off the stage and the remaining miners with him.

But not so Leon Mack!

There stood the son of his father's old friend facing his enemies alone.

Leon had a revolver—he knew how to use it, too.

"I'll stand by you!" he cried, springing to Jack's side; "but just the same, we had better light out."

"Surrender, Jack Fox!" shouted the leader of the vigilance committee, pushing toward the stage.

"That's my answer!" cried Fox, and a shot rang out through the variety hall.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ESCAPE FROM THE VIGILANCE COMMITTEE.

Young Jack Fox's shot flew wild.

Leon did not fire, but the vigilantes did.

In an instant a dozen revolvers cracked, the shots flying toward the stage.

The situation was simply hopeless, and Jack Fox realized it.

"We can do nothing here," he gasped.

Seizing a large screen, painted as scenery, he suddenly whirled it around in front of them, for the moment concealing his foes.

"Now run for your life, boy!" he breathed. "You can follow if you like. They will kill you if they catch you because you tried to defend me!"

There was no time to answer.

Leon saw no other way than to follow the son of his father's old friend.

They dashed out through a door in behind the stage.

One of the girls instantly bolted the door behind them.

"For heaven's sake, Jack, run for your life!" she cried.

The events of the next few minutes to Leon were always just a confused blur in his memory.

They fled to a rear door and down a flight of steps on the outside.

This brought them to an alley, and they had no more than gained it when they saw the vigilantes coming down from the main street.

Instantly these men opened fire upon them.

Fox fired twice and Leon once, but the darkness prevented damage from being done on either side.

Then Fox turned and ran up the alley to the back street, with Leon at his heels, and more shots flying after them.

Here there was a broncho standing ready saddled and hitched to a post.

"Can you ride, boy?" panted Fox. "Quick, now! There is only an instant between us and death if we waste time here."

"I can ride," replied Leon.

"Up in front, then!"

Leon climbed to the saddle clumsily enough compared with Jack Fox's flying leap upon the horse's flanks after he had unhitched.

(To be continued)

ITEMS OF GENERAL INTEREST

GRASS GROWS IN TREE.

In the E. W. Thornburrow yard in Wetmore, Kan., is a large bunch of blue grass growing in the fork of an elm tree ten feet from the ground. Every fall the residents of Wetmore, who are watching this curiosity, expect the grass to be winter killed, but every spring it shows up green and strong and matures seed. The grass has been growing in the tree for three years.

ELECTRIC PORTABLE SAW MILLS.

It is reported that electrically operated mills of the portable type are rapidly gaining in favor among lumbermen. In localities where water power is abundant and has already been partially converted into cheap electric power, the portable saw mill is especially popular. According to the president of a firm which is manufacturing electric portable saw mills, the demand is fast increasing in the South and West at the present time.

\$3,500 FOR MULE KICK.

The Supreme Court, in an opinion received at Pottsville, Pa., approved of the award of \$3,500 to Joseph Kiorkosky for injuries received by the kick of a mule. The Kaska William Supply Company was the defendant, and, while Kiorkosky, who is a boy, was not employed by it, Judge Koch ruled that it was the duty of the company to keep the boys away from their mules. The boy's teeth were knocked out and his jaw was fractured.

WOMAN SHOOTS BULL.

Mike Zimney, a farmer living east of Thief River Falls, Minn., was saved from being trampled to death by an enraged bull by the courage and prompt action of his wife.

The animal took offense at the flapping of Mr. Zimney's raincoat and attacked him, throwing him to the ground and breaking several ribs and his collarbone.

Mrs. Zimney, seeing the plight of her husband, quickly secured a shotgun and some shells. While she had never attempted to use firearms of any kind she managed to load the gun and shoot the animal, stunning him sufficiently to enable her to drag her unconscious husband out of danger. Mr. Zimney was brought to the hospital here for treatment.

HOW PIGEONS CARRY MESSAGES.

The general notion that all that has to be done in forwarding a dispatch by pigeons is to catch the bird, tie a letter to its leg, and then liberate it is wrong, as the method of attaching the message is of great importance. Besides, to be of much service,

the birds must have been thoroughly trained; otherwise, if the distance to be traversed be great, the pigeon will in all probability lose its way, as it depends more upon observation than anything else for guidance in its flights.

Prior to the siege of Paris, the method of affixing the message to the bird had not received that attention which it demanded, and consequently many dispatches were lost in transit.

At first the message was merely rolled up tightly, waxed over to protect it from the weather, and then attached to a feather in the bird's tail. But it was soon found that the twine which kept the missive in its place cut or damaged the paper, and therefore, in order to prevent it from being pecked by the pigeon and from being injured by wet, the dispatch was inserted in a small goosequill two inches in length.

The quill was then pierced close to each end with a red-hot bodkin, so as not to split it, and in the holes waxed silk threads were inserted to affix it to the strongest tail feather. By attaching the message to this part of the bird's body its flight was not in any way interfered with.

WHY DOES A BALL BOUNCE?

When you throw a ball against the floor in order to make it bounce the ball gets out of shape as soon as it comes in contact with the floor. As much of it as strikes the floor becomes perfectly flat, and because the ball has a quality known as elasticity, which means the ability to return to its proper shape, it returns to its shape at once. In doing so, it forces itself back into the air, and that is the bounce.

Of course the first thing we think of when we consider something that bounces is a ball, and in most cases a rubber ball. We are most familiar with the bouncing qualities of a rubber ball. Other balls, like the standard baseball, are not so elastic as the rubber ball filled with air, but a solid rubber ball is more elastic, and some golf balls are much more elastic than a solid rubber ball. The principle is the same when you drive a golf ball, except that when you bounce a ball on the floor the floor does the flattening, and when you drive a golf ball, the golf club does the flattening. A baseball flies away from the bat for the same reason. When you meet a fast pitched ball squarely on the nose with a good swing, it goes farther and faster than when you hit a slow-pitched ball with an equal swing. The reason for this is that in the case of the fast pitched ball you flatten the ball more, and it has so much more to do to recover its proper shape, that it bounces away from the bat at much greater speed and goes much farther than would a slow pitched ball under the same circumstances.

HAL, THE POOR BOY

OR

THE ADVENTURES OF TWO ORPHANS

By ED KING

(A SERIAL STORY)

CHAPTER XI (Continued)

"Yes; but bloodhounds don't take naturally to water. Mind what I say, they won't try it. We are safe on that score."

But Terry was very nervous.

He could hardly sit still in the boat.

Poor Quash was too much used up to move.

"Specs I doan care whether de dawgs git me or not," he moaned. "I's played out, 2222. Kain't do no mo', no mattah what happens. Dat's right."

Hal paddled on. As yet they had not been seen, and he began to hope they never would be.

The man-hunters were doing their work thoroughly, however.

They were provided with big, flaring torches of pine knots, which they kept flashing about.

At any moment the light might come their way, Hal saw.

Then the trouble would begin. But stay! The trouble had begun already!

"Oh, 2222, dis yere boat's done sprung a-leak!" Quash suddenly exclaimed.

"That's what it has!" added Terry. "The water is all up around my feet!"

"I know! I know!" replied Hal, paddling all the faster. "If we only had something to bail with, but we haven't a thing. The best we can do is to make for that island, I think!"

But Hal did not know.

The situation was worse than he thought.

Fact was the bottom of the dugout was all rotten.

In pushing away from the shore, Hal drove the dugout over the trunk of a submerged tree.

There had been something of a shock when it struck, and there was a great grinding when Hal worked the dugout over it.

He thought he was all right when he ran into deeper water again, for he did not know that half the bottom had been scraped away.

This left the inside rotten part all exposed.

The decayed wood was slowly dissolving, and the water soaked right through it and began rising in the boat.

Quash had to gather himself together and crowd in the stern.

But this didn't save him.

The water rose higher and higher, coming in very rapidly at last.

Hal made no talk, but shot away from the shadow of the overhanging cypress trees, and made for a small island which lay off shore a hundred yards or so.

He had no sooner done so than the light was upon him.

"Thar they be!" bawled Ben Bowser.

The dogs bayed furiously.

"Gee! We are goners!" cried Terry.

A big section of the bottom dropped away altogether.

It was every one for himself now.

Hal paddled furiously, and just succeeded in driving the nose of the dugout up against the island when the whole thing sank in three feet of water, leaving the boys to make their way ashore the best they could.

"It's all up with us, Hal!" groaned Terry. "They'll get us now, sure!"

CHAPTER XII.

THE FIND IN THE HIDING HOLE.

Hal and his companions were now in a sad plight.

When they got into the dugout, they did not stop to put on their clothes.

The night was warm, and they did not feel the need of them.

The consequence was when the dugout went down, the clothes went, too.

The boys were now prisoners on the island, as naked as the day they were born.

On shore the bloodhounds were barking furiously, and the man-hunters shouting to each other, every word being easily heard.

"Let's lie still and listen to their talk," said Hal.

"They can't get over here till daylight."

They crouched among the bushes, and lay there, listening.

"I tell you I seen them!" Ben Bowser was saying.

"They are over on the island now."

"Don't believe it was them at all," another voice

said. "It was just the waving of them branches down close to the water's edge."

"Do you mean to tell me that I'm so far gone that I don't know a tree from a boy," snarled Bowser.

"Stop your jawing! Make the dogs take to the water if you can!" the voice of the under-foreman cried.

"It won't do," spoke another voice, which Hal recognized as that of the superintendent on the new road. "I'm short-handed now. I protest against these boys being torn to pieces. You want to ketch them alive and give them a durned good licking. I say that there is going far enough."

"Oh, what a lot of jawing!" groaned Quash. "I wish dey'd settle what dey are gwine ter do wid us. I want ter know de wust."

"We want to build a raft, that's what," Captain Bowser now said. "Bad luck it is there hain't an ax among us all. What we've got ter do is to wait till we can send back to camp and get a couple. That's all."

"Sooner or later they are bound to get us," thought Hal. "What is to be done?"

But the whole affair was destined to take an entirely different turn from what any one expected.

The discussion went on for a few moments longer, and was getting pretty hot, when all at once the sharp cracks of rifles rang in the distance.

"What's that?" shouted Captain Bowser.

"Crack! Crack! Crack!"

Again and again the shots were heard.

Then suddenly came the distant clang of the big gong bell at the convict pen.

Once! Twice! Three times! So on, up to ten!

This was a signal seldom heard.

It meant a general uprising of the convicts.

Far in the distance the sky was lit up.

"It's up to us now!" bawled Bowser. "They've all riz. They knowed our coming out left the guards short-handed. We'd better let them boys go and git back jest ez quick ez ever we kin."

And this was the decision they acted upon.

Five minutes later, Hal and his friends had heard the last of them.

Without clothes, without food, unable to swim, the boys were left prisoners on the island, in the midst of the dreary swamp.

Fearing rattlesnakes and copperheads, the boys did not dare to move.

Many shots, loud shouts, wild yells. Those were the sounds they heard during the next hour.

Then it all quieted down, and nothing happened up to the time the sun rose over the swamp.

Terry slept some, and so did Quash, but Hal never closed his eyes.

As the day broke, the boy, leaving his sleeping companions behind him, started out to explore the island.

It was but a small affair.

The shore all around, except at the point where the boys had landed, was just a mass of canebrake.

Back a little, the ground rose higher, and here a thick clump of cypresses grew.

As Hal came in among the trees, he saw the remains of a hut, very rudely built.

Four great cypresses formed the four posts which held it together.

Between these logs had been piled up, and over the tops others laid, to form the roof.

It all looked very old, and in some places the logs had fallen away.

Hal pushed in through the open doorway, and as he did so he instantly went flying out again, for a huge rattlesnake went gliding over the broken floor.

There were some old sticks of furniture in the hut, and altogether the place offered better shelter than the canebrakes.

Hal went back, and finding Terry and Quash both awake, they all returned to the hut.

Quash was now in a high fever, and the boys had to carry him.

There were no more snakes to be seen when they got back to the hut, and they laid Quash down on an old bench.

The boy was talking wildly, threatening the under-foreman with all sorts of vengeance.

Hal saw that he was delirious, and he drew Terry away.

"We'll let him alone for a few minutes," he said. "Perhaps he will quiet down."

"He's crazy," replied Terry. "Do you think he is going to die?"

"I shouldn't wonder. He is terribly cut up."

"Isn't that awful. Oh, Hal, I am so hungry. What are we ever going to do?"

"There will be a way out, Terry. Be sure of that."

"I wish I could think so. How shaky this floor is. Who do you suppose ever built this hut?"

"Some runaway nigger, I guess."

"In slave times—before the war?"

"It looks old enough for that. I was thinking——"

"Oh! What's this?"

Suddenly the floor board gave way beneath Hal's feet.

It was but a thin affair, and as rotten as punk.

Down Hal tumbled into a hole about six feet square and four feet deep.

Terry, who stood farther along the floor, just escaped.

"Are you hurt?" he cried.

"Not a bit," said Hal. "Oh, Terry, come down here! This is a great place!"

"What have you struck, Hal?"

"A regular hiding hole. It's all full of stuff, too." Terry jumped down into the hole.

With poor Quash shouting out what he was going to do to the foreman, all unconscious of what was going on about him, the boys proceeded to investigate their find.

(To be continued)

TIMELY TOPICS

Herbie Coover and a red tablecloth saved the lives of two scores of passengers on Cumberland Valley Train No. 9, two miles east of Shippensburg, Pa., recently. A heavy storm passed over the valley and one of its pranks was to blow a big oak tree across the railroad tracks at Britton's Woods, near a sharp curve. Young Coover, whose home is near by, grabbed the tablecloth and flagged the train not a moment too soon.

A huge bear was trapped at Stony Bottom, near Marlinton, W. Va., recently. Though poor, he weighed nearly 400 pounds and had a wonderfully fine skin. He carried the trap a long distance and was caught in a wire fence not far from a farm house. The animal was an old sheep killer, and had been fed so much strychnine in bait he had become a drug fiend, and his flesh was considered too poisonous even for dogs.

When Mrs. Silas Johnston's hundred ducklings failed to show up for breakfast the other day she made an investigation and found them securely glued to the ground in the rear of a stock feed factory, in Union City, Tenn. A faucet to a molasses tank at the factory had been turned on, allowing 3,000 gallons of the syrup used for the stock feed to escape, and it spread over Mrs. Johnston's poultry yard.

The use of zinc wire in Germany is a subject of much discussion at present in the electrical periodicals of Germany, due to the increasing scarcity of copper and because iron wires are not always satisfactory. Considering the conductivity of copper to be 100 per cent, that of aluminum is 58.4, that of zinc is 28.5, while that of iron is 12.5. Rules are given on the use of zinc wires in house installations and on the use of zinc cables and zinc bus bars, in the German periodicals devoted to the electrical trade.

Greed seems to have wreaked vengeance on an avaricious kingfisher that plied the Yaquina River near Elk City, Ore., according to Wilmer Nelson, who lives on the bank. The boy noticed the bird dive and bring to the surface an unusually large trout. Then ensued a battle royal, the fish trying to escape and the bird trying to swallow its prey. When the kingfisher appeared distressed the boy went out in a boat, picked up the bird dead, with the big trout stuck in its gullet.

The water in the river at Appleton, Wis., has been low of late. A fisherman seeing a large sturgeon in a pool tried to pick it up by the tail, but failed. Some one yelled for him to jump on the fish and he did.

It was worse than riding a bucking broncho. Then some one yelled to the rough rider to hit the fish over the head. He picked up a stone and kept pounding until it was stunned. Then it was taken into a mill and cut up. But the rider suffered a badly bruised knee from being thrown against the rocks. It is unlawful to catch sturgeon, but it is not known that there is any law against riding one to death.

When is a one-round beggar not a one-armed beggar? Patrolman John J. Mullin learned the answer when he went to the hospital. Mullin caught Russell Head, who says he is a waiter, begging alms on Market Street, near O'Farrell, San Francisco. One sleeve of the alms-seeker's coat was empty, and the arrest caused murmurs of sympathy for the woebegone beggar to well from the lips of passers-by. Mullin took Head to a nearby patrol box. With bewildering prestidigitation, Head produced a second solid, substantial arm from under his coat. At the end of the "new" arm was attached a fist which resembled a ham. Before Mullin could recover from his astonishment, Head leaned his fist against the former's jaw and Mullin fell to the pavement. Head ran away from there, with Mullin in hot pursuit. A brisk battle followed, during which Head seized the patrolman's third finger of the right hand in his mouth and nearly bit it off. Head is now in the City Prison charged with begging and resisting a policeman, and Mullin is in the hospital with a lacerated finger.

Dandelion, once looked upon as only a weed, is rapidly becoming a plant of commercial importance, for it is valuable in many ways. The Scientific American prints pictures of a dandelion farm near New Haven, Conn., and of the crop, detailing at the same time some of the manifold virtues of the plant. "The use of dandelion leaves as a pot herb or salad in the early spring is well known in this country," it says. "The country people make from them a tonic recommended for purifying the blood. Its use for the table has become so universal that in a number of places large fields are devoted entirely to its culture. The leaves when boiled form an agreeable substitute for the spinach and other greens at a much earlier period of the season than that in which any other plant is found to ripen in this climate. The flowers are used for making so-called dandelion wine." Many tons of dandelion roots are imported from Germany, Austria and France every year, local growers seemingly not knowing that the roots are worth more than the tops. They are dug up in the late fall or early spring, when they contain the full virtue of their medicinal qualities. The dried root is sold by wholesale druggists at from 22 to 28 cents a pound.

Fame and Fortune Weekly

NEW YORK, AUGUST 11, 1916.

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Good Current News Articles

Twenty-five American locomotives of the most modern type have been purchased recently in this country by the Madrid, Alicante & Zaragoza Railway of Spain. The last locomotives bought by the company were secured from Germany.

A Johannesburg despatch says that a diamond mine has been discovered eighteen miles from Pretoria, near the Premier, which produced the Cullinan stone. The roads leading to it are crowded with wagon loads of people seeking to peg out claims.

John Stark, a merchant of Evansville, Ind., struck at a rat in his stable and his glasses fell in such a position that they formed a yoke in the path of the rat, into which it ran. The glasses stuck and the rat escaped into a hole, carrying Stark's favorite lenses. Stark dug into the hole, but found no trace of his glasses and is convinced they still are being carried by the rat.

In Buffalo, N. Y., on June 15, the Preparedness League of American Dentists opened a registration bureau in the hope of enrolling 20,000 dentists who will prepare free at least one applicant each to meet the requirements for enlistment for the Marine Corps. The standard of enlistment for the Marine Corps requires the applicant to have at least twenty sound teeth, with four opposed molars and four opposed incisors. Properly filled teeth are counted as sound.

A despatch from Calcutta says that a case of human sacrifice is reported from a Hindu temple at Jaffna. It appears that certain Hindus of Vannar-ponnai were strongly tempted by a dream regarding treasure trove. Believing that by the sacrifice of an innocent youth to the goddess they could obtain the desired money, they led a youth of 20 at dead of night to the temple of the goddess, where he was drugged and his throat cut.

New light is thrown on the question of rats in the trenches along the western front in the present European war in a letter written to the New York Times by James T. Clarkson, of Montreal, who seems to have had practical experience with rodents in warfare. "True," he writes, "there are thousands of rats in and out of the trenches, but I have yet to hear of one live man who was bitten by them. It used to be quite a sport to put a piece of cheese on the end of a bayonet and put rifles over the trench tops, and when, through the periscope, a rat was seen eating the cheese, to pull the trigger and it was all over with Mr. Rat. But it was discovered that rats could smell gas long before the men could, so today, as soon as the men in the trenches see the rats getting uneasy they know that gas is coming, and on go the helmets in time to ward it off. Also the rats eat up all decayed matter and have cut down foul smells to a minimum."

Grins and Chuckles

"Don't you find that a baby brightens up a household wonderfully?" "Yes," said the parent, with a sigh; "we have gas going most of the night now."

"Mamma, what do they mean when they speak of 'information in a nut-shell'?" "It must be the kind your father carries around in his head."

"Willie! Didn't I tell you if I ever caught you fighting again I'd whip you?" "Yes, ma, but you don't need to do it this time. Jimmie Smith done it already."

"So Jones is still living at the same boarding-house where he was ten years ago. I should think he'd get awfully tired of it." "He does, but he's married to the landlady."

"That dog of yours is a confounded nuisance. He kept me awake all last night barking at the moon." "I can't help that. It isn't my fault if the moon insists on making faces at him."

"And what is your son William doing, Mrs. Bjones?" asked the visitor. "Oh, Willie, he's an actor, and doing very well." "William an actor?" said the visitor. "Why, I thought he was deaf and dumb?" "He is," said Mrs. Bjones, "but that doesn't make any difference. He's playing 'Hamlet' this week in the movies."

An old fellow on his death-bed, in making his will, murmured to his lawyer: "And to each of my employees who has been with me twenty years or more I bequeath \$2,000." "Holy smoke! What generosity!" the lawyer exclaimed. "No, not at all," said the sick man. "You see, none of them has been with me over a year; but it will look good in the papers, won't it?"

KUHLA'S MOUNTAIN.

By Horace Appleton

An English regiment in India, a few years ago, had an officer in it named Harry St. Clair.

Captain St. Clair was what is sometimes in this country termed a lady-killer, a heart-crusher, and other American phrases, to denote that class of humanity desirous to make themselves particularly agreeable to ladies.

When he arrived in India he found but few ladies on whom to practice his coquetry, and, it is said, the tall, handsome young captain pined for some weeks, and even talked of resigning his commission and returning to England.

But his usually jolly disposition got the better of his homesickness, and he became once more the pride of the camp.

His regiment removed from Calcutta to another point down the coast, where the thrilling adventure I am about to relate occurred.

Captain St. Clair, flirt as he was, was not invulnerable to beauty.

It was the daughter of one of those Indian kings that was destined to completely captivate the young Englishman.

Zulema, as she was known, was that peculiar type of Eastern beauty that never fails to captivate.

Eyes large, dark, and lustrous, purest olive complexion, with regular features and excellent form.

Zulema had a native lover named Kulah, one of the small princes of the interior, and noted all over the country as a great beast tamer and charmer.

Zulema grew cold toward the great beast-tamer, and at last rejected him altogether.

"I know only too well who has won you from me," said Kulah to the princess, as they stood beneath the spreading branches of a large palm-tree. "It is the Englishman who has crossed the seas to win you."

Zulema was not unlike her more civilized sisters. She liked to keep her suitors in doubt as long as possible, and was rather vain of the number of her victims.

"Admit it, Zulema. You certainly once loved me. Has not this bold Englishman, the enemy of our country, and an intruder on our soil, won your heart?"

"If you value your life and liberty, Kulah, do not give utterance to words that will put them in jeopardy."

"What am I saying that will jeopardize my life and liberty?" asked the Indian prince.

"Have you not just now called the English our enemies and intruders on our soil?" retorted Zulema.

"Go, then, report me; have me arrested, brought before that noble captain of yours, and shot for a traitor. It would be a befitting act of one who once

professed to love me," said the Indian prince, bitterly.

The indignant prince walked away without another word.

Poor Zulema stood for several moments in silence. The dark look of Kulah was far more foreboding than his threat.

That very evening, as Captain St. Clair was in his quarters, a little native informed him that a lady wished to see him.

The young captain arose and followed the boy, who led him directly to a palmetto grove, where Zulema awaited him.

"My lovely Zulema, this is indeed a surprise," said the young captain, taking the beautiful girl in his arms.

"I sent for you, captain, to warn you," said the princess.

"To warn me of what?" asked the captain. "Is there likely to be an outbreak among the natives?"

"There is personal danger to yourself."

"To me; how am I in danger?"

"There is danger of one man, who will take your life."

"Who?"

"Prince Kulah," was the reply.

"Prince Kulah?" said the brave young captain, with a smile. "Why, he is my most steadfast friend. He would sooner think of harming his parents than myself."

The captain spoke assuringly, and, in fact, he had the utmost confidence in the native.

"You are mistaken in him. He is cunning; he is dark and treacherous; he will do you harm."

"Why, my dear Zulema, he is to go with us tomorrow on our grand hunt. He is to bring his tamed leopards, and give us an exhibition of their skill in catching the deer."

"Do not go with him, as you value your life do not go."

"Have no fears, sweet Zulema, Kulah will do me no harm," and pressing a kiss on those warm, ruby lips, the young officer, laughing at the fears of the girl, went away.

The day of the grand hunt came.

Horses, elephants and carts were brought into requisition.

A score of the natives, including mostly young men, and six officers, were in the party.

Kulah, with his hooded leopard in the cart, reported himself ready.

Among the natives was one shy boy, who had asked to be a member of the hunting party.

Through jungles, over plains, and on down to the great rocky coast.

Tigers were shot in the jungles, deer chased on the plains and mountains, and various wild game secured.

It was indeed a grand hunt; one which those engaged in it will never forget.

There were two of the hunting party who seemed to vie with each other in their attentions to Captain St. Clair.

They were Kulah, the prince and beast-tamer, and the boy. The latter was never far from the captain's side.

When the boy seemed to grow weary with running with the natives, the young Englishman sympathized with him, and had him placed on his own elephant.

It was the afternoon of the second day.

Kulah had just removed the hood from the head of the leopard, and started the fierce animal after a deer.

Creeping slowly along, cat-like, his belly almost touching the ground, the beautiful animal made toward the small herd of deer.

He seemed likely to succeed in the capture, when the animals took fright and flew to the jungle, with the leopard hard at their heels.

At this moment a herd of buffalo was discovered, and the officers, grasping their rifles, mounted their horses and dashed into it.

A few ringing shots brought down one or two, and the rest scampered away.

Captain Harry St. Clair had selected a large, fine bull, and fired at him, but failed to bring him down. Determined to capture so fine a prize, he gave chase. Away over the plain he flew, the distance between himself and his friends growing greater every moment.

The afternoon passed in the chase before, by a well-directed shot, he brought down the buffalo.

It was only when he had triumphantly swooped down on the animal, and cut its throat, that he discovered he was lost, and his horse thoroughly blown.

The horrors of that night will never be forgotten by Captain St. Clair, and it was only by sacrificing his noble horse to the wild beasts, and seeking refuge in a tall tree, that he managed to escape.

When morning came he set out to find his friends.

He had not traveled more than an hour, when he came out on the great rocky coast.

One of the dogs that had been with the party came bounding toward him, and fawned at his feet.

"Some of the guides must be near here," said the captain. "I will take my seat on this rock that projects out over the water, and let them hunt me, as I am thoroughly tired."

He walked to where a great flat rock projected out over the sea.

There was a smaller stone against a high bluff that afforded an excellent seat.

With his back against the great high wall of stone, Captain St. Clair gazed out over the broad expanse of water.

While sitting there Captain St. Clair was lured into utter forgetfulness.

His back was toward the thick jungle, not more than a hundred paces distant.

He did not see a sharp, keen pair of eyes peer forth, and glare with infernal hatred on him.

He did not see the treacherous Kulah bring his leopard to the edge of the jungle, remove the hood, and start the fierce animal toward him.

Slowly and cautiously, without noise and with all the motions of a creeping cat, the leopard glided over the space, stopping now and then, crouching to the earth only to arise and glide forward more cautiously.

Half the distance has been passed by the deadly beast, and the young officer, in his strange Highland costume, sits unmoved, gazing seaward.

Will no one give a cry of warning?

Yes; the cry is given.

It is one shrill scream, and the boy who had accompanied the captain the day before leaps over a rock behind him, and with only a boar spear, at one bound, places himself before the deadly leopard.

The animal, perfectly furious at being balked, leaps upon him, and bears him to the earth, with a death cry gurgling from the youth's throat.

When Captain St. Clair springs to his feet and seizes his double-barreled gun, he discovers a leap-tearing the throat of the beautiful boy who had followed him so faithfully the day before.

Springing down from the rock, he placed the muzzle of his gun at the leopard's ear, and sends a bullet crashing through its brain.

A yell of hatred and despair issues from the jungle, and the next moment he is confronted by Kulah with poised lance.

In an instant the young officer comprehended it all, and raising his gun once more to his face, he fires.

The ball pierced the heart of the treacherous prince, and he fell dead.

Captain St. Clair dragged the leopard from the wounded boy, and tore open his jacket to see how badly he was hurt.

"Heavens!" he cried, starting back. "It is a woman. Oh, it is—how was I so blind?—it is my darling Zulema, given her life for mine," sobbed the brave, strong man.

It was Zulema, who, fearing the treachery of Kulah, had disguised herself to protect her lover.

He raised her head, called her by endearing names, and pressed his lips to hers.

The girl smiled, essayed to speak, but the power was gone forever.

The friends of Captain St. Clair, who were looking for him, and hearing the gun-shots, came to the spot.

The remains of the beautiful girl were taken to the camp, and there buried, while the treacherous Kulah was left to feed the wild beasts.

Captain, now Colonel St. Clair, is still in the British service in India. He is a gray-haired man, bowed down with grief, and says he only waits his time to come to be laid by the side of the only woman he ever loved.

INTERESTING ARTICLES

Although the United States Marine Corps has no reserve, hundreds of former members have volunteered for service in the old corps in case of emergency, it was announced at Marine Corps headquarters. About 4,000 of the less than 10,000 "soldiers of the sea" are now actively suppressing revolution and restoring order in Haiti and Santo Domingo.

It is reported that a preliminary survey has been made with a view to develop a power plant on the Bay of Fundy by utilizing the bay's high tides. A recent experiment with a current motor is said to have resulted satisfactorily. If the plant is established, it may result in the creation of extensive new enterprises in Nova Scotia and Southern New Brunswick.

From a reliable source it is learned that practically all French observation or "kite" balloons are provided with parachutes which may be used by the observers in cases of emergency. Recently some 15 balloons broke away from their mooring during a high wind and drifted toward the German lines. It is reported that the majority of observers succeeded in alighting behind the French lines by the timely use of their parachutes.

Aside from the short-circuiting or grounding of overhead transmission lines by birds coming in contact with the wires, power companies are confronted with the problem of protecting switches and bus-bars from rats and mice. Recently, in an American power-house a rat succeeded in reaching the interior of an oil switch and came in contact with the "live" or current-carrying members. Not only was the rat completely burned up, but the switch mechanism was ruined beyond repair.

Forty high school girls, stenographers and other women on their way to Portland, Ore., were thrown into a panic when two mice invaded a Sellwood street car. In the confusion two girls fainted, several tried to leap from the car, and a number sustained bruises and scratches. After five minutes of feminine screaming, mostly from safe places on the tops of seats, two men caught the mice and the car moved on. The mice were discovered on the floor of the car by a school girl, who screamed and led the general scramble for places on top of seats, thus starting the panic.

Chinese carpenters have been sent in large numbers from India to work with the English expeditionary force in Mesopotamia. Officers at Rangoon received special instructions to employ Chinese car-

penters for work with the English military forces, because of their great skill in building all sorts of temporary shelters and bridges. Russia has drawn upon China for large numbers of laborers to work in Siberian mines, to build railways and replace white labor in agricultural districts robbed of their men by the war, and France has also drawn upon China for agricultural labor.

Siberia is no longer thought of as a land of desolate ice fields and barren steppes. On the other hand, it is known to be one of the most wonderful lands on earth. The rich prairies of the middle Amur and the Udaï region, where the wild vine grows freely, and the fertile black-earth plains of the Tobal and the Ishim—not mere patches of rich land, but steppes covering tens of millions of acres—and vast tracts densely covered with forests, predict for this far northern country a remarkable future. Its population is steadily increasing, and it is already beginning to be one of the great grain centers of the earth.

While hundreds of summer visitors on the beach and in the South End pavilion at Spring Lake, N. J., looked on helpless, Charles Bruder, a bell-boy, was attacked by a shark the other afternoon and before help could arrive lost both his legs. He died ten minutes after being brought to shore. Bruder was 100 feet beyond the life lines when he was heard to shout. The guards launched a boat and were soon at his side. He told them "a shark bit me" and then became unconscious. Examination of the body showed that the shark had bitten Bruder in the side before taking his legs off. The left leg was cut off above the knee and the right leg just below the knee.

The remarkable genius of Joshua Tripe, the village sign painter of Dailey, Mich., may result in a suit for damages being brought against the village. Tripe a few days ago completed a mail course in sign painting, and to show his skill painted a board fence on the side of a barn standing along the main street. It looked so natural that several farmers have skinned their knuckles trying to hitch their teams to it, and even birds have attempted to light on it, slipping down the sides of the barn to the ground and flying away in disgust. The climax came, however, when Tripe's bulldog chased a stranger down the street, who, in trying to get away, attempted to jump the supposed fence and nearly knocked his brains out. Several attorneys have already written the stranger, who gives his name as Frelinghusen, offering legal aid in getting damages.

ARTICLES OF ALL KINDS

NEST ON SCHOOLROOM CLOCK.

For the tenth time in as many years a linnet has built a nest over the clock in the Peachtree school in Monterey County, California.

The windows are let down from the top to admit the birds, who appear about the same date every year to build their nest. At present there are five little birds in the nest, and the eyes of the pupils are on the nest most of the time, as the mother bird comes about every five minutes with food for them.

The male bird refuses to feed the young birds, but gets on the clock and sings, much to the amusement of the pupils.

CONVICTS' BAND LED PARADE.

The feature of a big preparedness parade at Marquette, Mich., as part of the Fourth of July celebration, was the appearance at the head of the column of the Marquette State Prison band, which was requisitioned by the committee because one of the other bands had disappointed it.

It was the first time the band had ever played outside the prison walls and the first time in years that many of the members had seen anything of the outside world. In the band were eight life prisoners, convicted of murder. Six of them were from Detroit.

The shortest term men among the twenty-three bandmen is serving sentence from two and a half to five years. The men were on honor and were accompanied only by Deputy Warden Catlin and one officer, who went along to make the arrangements for transportation. The men were greatly pleased with the applause they received along the line of march.

A YOUTHFUL MARKSMAN.

Thirteen-year-old Kirk Shearer of Carlisle, Pa., has issued a challenge to any person under 15 years, from anywhere in the East Atlantic States, to meet him at a clay pigeon shoot. This challenge covers New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland and Ohio.

Kirk, although 13 years old, has been shooting from the time he was able to hold a gun, and is fast forging to the front as one of the best amateur shots in his part of the country. His father has for over forty years been an enthusiastic lover of field and stream, and his large family of boys, of which Kirk is easily the best shot, follow in his footsteps.

Several years ago, when with great difficulty he could hold a double-barreled shotgun, he defeated at the traps of the Carlisle Gun Club one of the oldest and finest field shots in that section. Recently in a bird match at Carlisle he tied for the honors two of the crack shots of Southern Pennsylvania. As a

member of the Laurel Rifle Club Kirk helped to kill five live deer, and, although so young, he never missed a drive or was laid up during the hunt.

Recently in a match in Harrisburg, where the best Philadelphia team was shooting the best of the Harrisburg gunners, in a special shot, Kirk "got" 13 out of 15 "birds."

PETS OF FAMOUS MEN.

George Washington was very fond of horses when a boy. One of the stories that the children read first is about the spirited young colt that George tried to ride. You remember, perhaps, how he injured the young horse. Then Weems tells us that his father said he would rather have a truth-telling son than all the fine horses in the world.

Another famous American who was fond of horses when a boy was Ulysses S. Grant, says a writer in "Something to Do." Even when he started to school at West Point he was noted for his horsemanship. No animal was too wild for him to tame. His reward for his skill and kindness came when he became a great general, because his horse once saved him from being captured as prisoner of war.

Lincoln, we know, was particularly fond of birds. There is a pretty story about his dismounting from his horse, and going back to replace some young birds in a nest from which they had fallen.

Audubon, the first great friend of the birds in this country, loved them when he was a child. Instead of playing with other boys, he used to spend hour after hour in his father's big garden, watching the birds, noting how they built their nests and got their food. Even then he began to try to paint them. Louis Agassiz, whom we think of later as knowing about the deep sea, was also a lover of birds. When he was a student in college, he was visited in his room by about forty birds who made their home in a small pine tree he had set up in the garden.

Whittier, the poet, was a farm boy. When he was very young he learned to drive oxen instead of horses. They were so tame and gentle he used to sit on their heads with his legs in their faces and then lie back and rest between their horns.

Francis Thompson, an English poet, was a great lover of birds. One day in autumn he fastened to one of the wings of a migrating swallow a small piece of oiled paper, on which were written the words: "Swallow, little swallow, I wonder where you pass the winter." The next spring the swallow came back to his nest in Thompson's garden at the usual time. The poet saw something tied to his leg. He caught the bird and found a small piece of oiled paper on which was his answer: "Florence, Italy, at the house of Castellara. Cordial greetings to the friends in the north."

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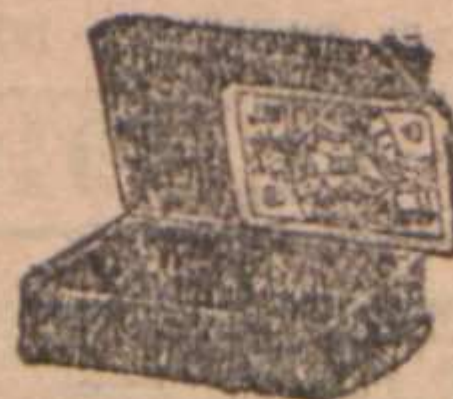
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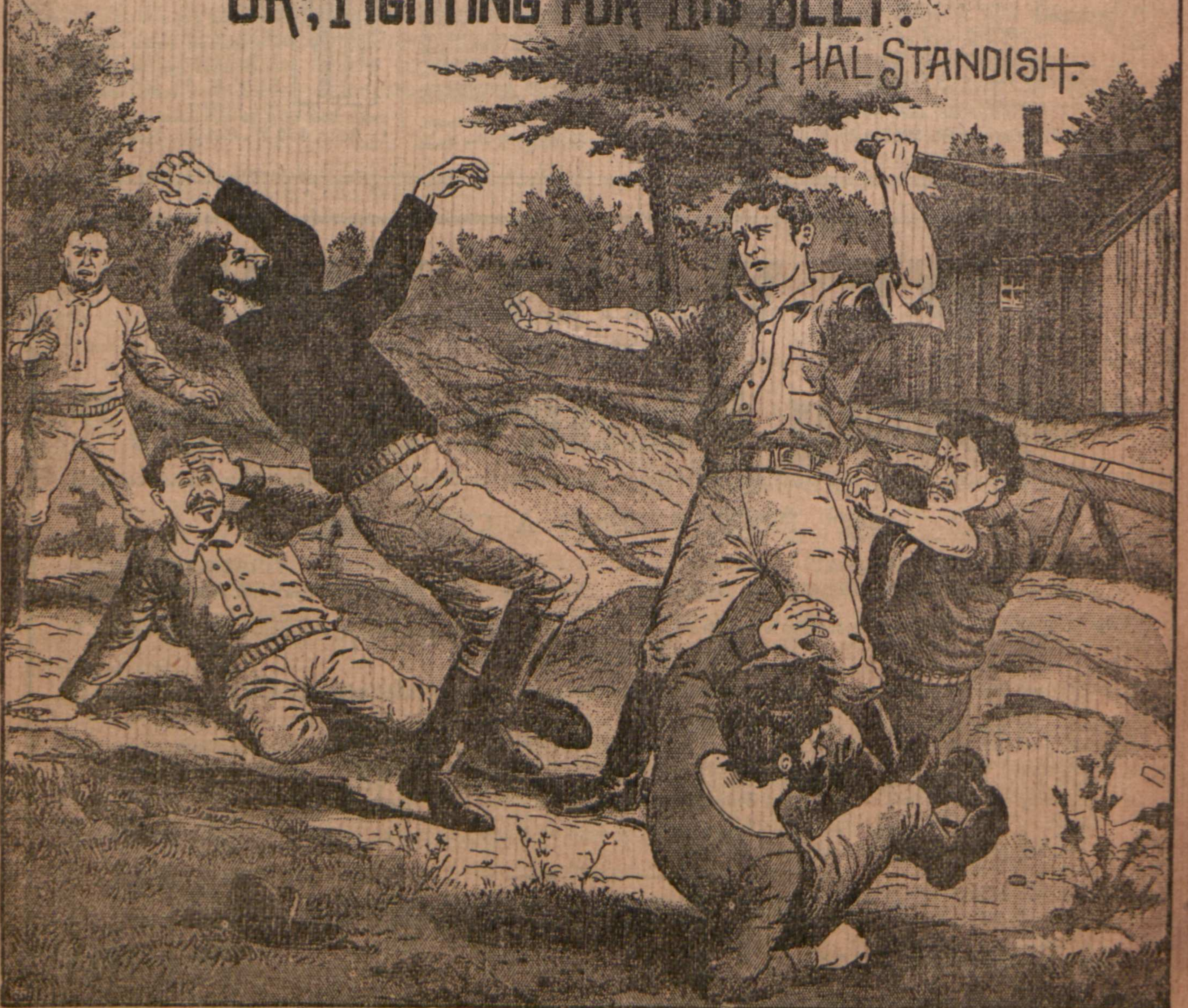
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